THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

AND

SLAVERY.

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE RELATION OF THE EARLY METHODISTS TO SLAVERY.

BY

DANIEL DE VINNÉ,

OF THE NEW-YORK EAST CONFERENCE.

NEW-YORK:

FRANCIS HART, 63 CORTLANDT STREET.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.....PAGE 9.

RISE OF MODERN SLAVERY.

Its Introduction into America—Its Collision with Christianity—Plan of Primitive Emancipation—Slavery sought Refuge in the Church—Ecclesiastical Decision.

CHAPTER II.....PAGE 11.

INTRODUCTION OF SLAVERY IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

First Members Poor—No Slaves—Slavery came in without the knowledge of Mr. Wesley or of Mr. Asbury—During the Revolution—Through the Separated Conference in Virginia—First efforts to extirpate it 1780—Declaration of Sentiment—Prohibitory Law—Exceptions—A moral and real Emancipation always anticipated.

CHAPTER III.....PAGE 20.

ORGANIZATION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH. HER CONSTITUTION NON-SLAVEHOLDING.

History of the Rule on Slavery—In what her Constitution consists—Main Question stated—Terms Defined—Design of the Rule—Subject treated Philologically—Ethically—Historically.

CHAPTER IV.....PAGE 28.

THE RULE CONSIDERED PHILOLOGICALLY.

Enslaving—Its Grammatical Meaning—Rule of Interpretation—Corroborative Evidence—How it was Understood by our Founders—Only Consistent View of the Rule.

CHAPTER V.....PAGE 34.

THE RULE CONSIDERED ETHICALLY OR MORALLY.

Articles of Religion a part of the Constitution of our Church—No Ecclesiastical Rule to be interpreted in opposition to them—No need of a change in the General Rules to exclude Slavery—The Requisition for it is already in the Constitution—Slavery forbidden in detail—So understood by our Founders—No Special Law in the Bible to sustain Slavery—The Law of Reciprocity applies to Slaves—What Christianity teaches in the premises.

CHAPTER VI.....PAGE 41.

THE RULE CONSIDERED HISTORICALLY.

Historical Circumstances Necessary to a Right Exposition—Spirit of the Times when the Rule was Instituted—Principles of Freedom Predominant—Congress of 1774—Statesmen—Jefferson—Virginia—Georgia—Presbyterians—Baptists—If the Methodists had tolerated Slavery they would have been behind all others.

Chapter VII.....Page 46.

SUSPENSION.

Prohibitory Rule—Its Exceptions—Its Suspensions—Morally it was not Suspended—Its Enforcement was only carrying out the Common Law of God's Government—What led to the Suspension—Its Effects on the Church—What the Slave lost by it—In many Cases it was enforced—At the South, the Adjustment of what was Right left to the Administrator and the Conscience of the Master.

Chapter VIII.....Page 54.

COLLATERAL EVIDENCE OF NON-CONSTITUTIONAL SLAVEHOLDING.

Efforts to Extirpate—Never acquiesced in Slaveholding—Preached against it—Opposition—Dr. Coke—Rev. J. Everett—Rev. G. Dougherty—Mobbed in Charleston—Fell a Martyr—Bishop Asbury's Testimony—Emancipations—Methodists fled to Ohio—Sayle—Axley—Rev. Freeborn Garretson—His Plan of Emancipation.

Chapter IX.....Page 66.

POLITICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL ACTION AGAINST SLAVERY.

Petitions to the State Legislatures—Gen. Washington—Address of the General Conference of 1796 Circulated—Wesley's Thoughts on Slavery—United Effort—During which the Church prospers—Adverse Influences—Cotton Gin—Purchase of Louisiana.

Chapter X.....Page 72.

SUCCESS OF FIRST EFFORTS TO EXTIRPATE SLAVERY.

Great Revival of Religion among the Colored People, 1780–1800—Great Additions to the Church—Unprecedented Emancipation—Preachers try to bring Master and Slave under the same Rule—Failed—Slavery in the Primitive Church and in Ours Contrasted—Master's Duty—Slave's Duty—Primitive Church had but One Law for Both—In Effect we have Two—Unwritten Laws of Slavery carried out in our Church—They Sanction it—They more than Neutralize all Written Testimony against it.

Chapter XI.....Page 85.

FELLOWSHIP WITH SLAVHOLDERS.

The Church the embodiment of Christianity—Two Ways to sustain an Evil—The Scriptural Rule—The Covetous—The Railer—The Extortioner—Moral Heresies—Nothing cohesive in Slavery—It can not stand without outward support.

Chapter XII.....Page 91.

FUTURE ACTION OF THE CHURCH.

Undo what has been done Unconstitutionally—Repeal the Chapter on Slavery—No change of the General Rule necessary—The Requisition to Exclude Slavery is in the Constitution of our Church already—General Conference should Re-affirm the Declaration of 1780—Give a Judicial Decision in regard to the Meaning of the Rule—Prohibit the Observance of the Unwritten Laws of Slavery in the Administration of the Church—Allow to Every Member the Right of Suit—Right of Testimony—Recognition of Marriage—To require all Members, Bond or Free, to observe the Laws of Christianity, whether in accordance with the Slave Laws or not.

INTRODUCTION.

In this historical survey, I purpose to prove that the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded on a non slaveholding basis. That it never was the intention of her founders that Slavery should have been continued in her communion; and that all the slaveholding which has ever been in our Church, has been in contravention to the spirit and design of her organic law.

In doing this, I shall mainly depend on documentary testimony. Oral testimony is about wholly lost. The reaction which has been setting back upon our Church for the last thirty-five years, has been inimical to its transmission. A few items, however, have been preserved. During several years' residence in the South, and while in charge of four large circuits, the author has not only seen the working of the slave system, but has been enabled to glean from those of a former generation, some precious items of our early history, in regard to Slavery.

The object of this composition is a defence of our fathers, and of the Church which they founded, against the reproach which has been cast upon both, not only by their open enemies, but also by their reputed but mistaken sons—especially that which has been put forth in many of the speeches of the last general conference. For as Christians, disciples of John Wesley, as American Methodists, we feel dishonored before our European brethren, and in sight of the civilized world, that the Church of our early choice, should be stigmatized as "constitutionally, historically and administratively a Slaveholding Church." We readily acknowledge that the inexplicable or contradictory expletive "though anti Slavery," is as often asserted, but what it means in this connection we cannot tell.

We deplore the present position of our Church; and in view of all the ground, having traveled fifteen thousand miles in Slaveholding States; having visited, perhaps, a thousand plantations; and having conversed freely with Methodist slaves and slaveholders, we must here record our solemn and religious testimony, that in our opinion, the influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as administered for the last thirty years, has been unfavorable to the emancipation of Slavery, either in our Church, or in our country. For we fully believe, that "the plea of neces-

sity—the plea of certain circumstances," and other excuses for the continuance of Slavery in the Church, have done vastly more to uphold this enormous evil amongst us, than any direct advocacy of it could have possibly done. And we say this in sorrow, for we would not unnecessarily utter one word in opposition to the expressed opinions of our chief ministers, whose judgment, in all other respects, we highly appreciate.

But is there not a cause? Our connection with Slavery is repelling thousands from our Church, and it is continually insulting the moral sense of hundreds of thousands, who, otherwise, would wait on our ministry. Slavery, at this moment, is forcing its way over the fairest portions of our country; it is attempting through the Supreme Court to nationalize and legalize itself everywhere; it is putting forth strenuous efforts to revive the Foreign Slave Trade, and also to strike down the liberty of the Press, and the freedom of the Pulpit. The sword is coming upon us, or the "African flood," as Bishop Asbury seventy years' ago denominated the retributive justice of God against Slavery. And all the while we are silent—and the silence in many places is deemed a virtue. "The longer the better." But is this wise? Is it the more excellent way? Will it lessen the penalty which will surely be executed upon those who oppress the stranger and rob the hireling of his wages?

With many others, we had supposed that the division of 1844 would have changed our policy on the moral question of Slavery. But we have been disappointed. That great disruption was not on moral grounds. The moral question of Slavery is yet to be decided. In view of this decision, the author has felt it his duty to set forth his testimony, and thus to address his brethren, that they may bring back our beloved Church to the basis on which she was at first founded. As much as ever, he still loves the Church of his early choice, in whose blessed communion he has passed nearly fifty happy years, and in whose fellowship he still hopes to continue till he dies.

West Morrisania,
Aug. 12, 1857.

CHAPTER I.

RISE OF MODERN SLAVERY.

Its Introduction into America—Its Collision with Christianity—Plan of Primitive Emancipation—Slavery sought Refuge in the Church—Ecclesiastical Decision.

The Modern Slave Trade commenced its operations in the sixteenth century; and within one hundred and fifty years from that period it imported 1,500,000 slaves into North America and the West Indies. With its rise at this time, a new difficulty was originated in the Church:—It was the first instance on record in which Slavery was attempted to be ingrafted upon an already existing Christian community.

In former times and in heathen countries, Christianity had battled with Slavery, and had achieved two splendid victories. On those occasions her course was clear. The Gospel which was to go to all, was, under the apostolic administration, intended for the benefit of all, whether they were bond or free. The Primitive Church, like the Jewish, had in it but "one law for the home born and the stranger," and but one administration for all her members: the principles of which were equality—not however of condition, for the world is made of variety—but an equality, of right, in the privileges and immunities of the new relation.

But when Slavery in our country, as an institution, was to be ingrafted upon Christianity, it was soon found that the one law principle, the one administration, and "the giving of that which was just and equal," would not suit the respective classes. They could not be applied to them in the relation of master and slave. And thus the slaveholding proprietors in the new colonies were involved in difficulties.

For at this period there were many Christians who supposed that baptism imparted, somehow, an impersonation of Christ, and that, consequently, the degradation of Slavery was inconsistent with the dignity of the Christian. This notion, although it originated in the Church of Rome, had great influence with the Churchmen of Virginia and the Carolinas. And it brought with it the following serious difficulty:—

That the negro must either remain without the benefits of Christianity, or he must be admitted to emancipation. The demands of avarice, however, were strong and active, and some of the Colo-

nial Legislatures ventured to decree that baptism and Slavery were not necessarily inconsistent. And in this opinion Yorke and Talbot, the crown lawyers of the mother country, concurred. But the decision was only that of secular men, and it could not quiet the conscience.

The question was then referred to the Church; and Gordon, Bishop of London, pronounced *ex cathedra*, that "the embracing of the Gospel did not make the least alteration in civil property." This decree, thus vaguely worded, was at once received as an ecclesiastical sanction for Slavery and the Slave Trade. "Authority," says Locke, "keeps in ignorance and error more people than all other causes." Thus it turned out, that Slavery, driven out by conscience and the common sense of uninterested men, sought a refuge in the Bible. And from that day to the present, it has ever made the false or equivocal interpretations of ministers and of churches its main support—its chief bulwark of defense.

In passing, it is really worthy of notice, that after this decision and the revival of modern Slavery, nearly all subsequent commentators on the Scriptures have expounded those passages in the Bible referring to servitude in a very different sense from that of their predecessors. Most of them seem to have seen every thing through the haze or medium of Slavery. Thus it has resulted, that this "complicated crime," as John Wesley and Bishop Asbury have called it, has so long nestled in the bosom of the Church. And there it will ever continue, until the true exposition of God's Word is set forth and applied to it. For we will never be better than our Bibles. And while Slavery "under any circumstances" is supposed to be allowed in the Bible, it will be perpetuated both in the Church and in the State. But the truth is now destroying this "complicated villainy" "by the brightness of his coming." This fancied asylum for Slavery in God's Word will yet be its sepulcher. Its fancied city of refuge in the Church, will soon be the city of its destruction.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCTION OF SLAVERY IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

First Members Poor — No Slaves — Slavery came in without the Knowledge of Mr. Wesley or of Mr. Asbury — During the Revolution — Through the Separated Conference in Virginia — First efforts to extirpate it 1780 — Declaration of Sentiment — Prohibitory Law — Exceptions — A moral and real Emancipation always anticipated.

The Emerald Isle, which has sent from her shores more soldiers to foreign armies, and more Romanist Priests, and more Gospel ministers than any other portion of Christendom of equal size and population, was the country honored by planting the two first Methodist societies in America. But soon after, John Wesley, whose parish was the world, sent over regular itinerants to establish and carry out the work. Like the primitive apostles, they began their work in the most humble manner, and generally among the poorer classes. Their first societies were, perhaps, altogether composed of those whose moderate circumstances kept them wholly from the least participation in Slavery.

The precise time and manner in which Slavery found its way into our Church, cannot, at this period, be very satisfactorily ascertained. But they do the greatest injustice and dishonor to the head and heart of John Wesley, who assert that it was with his knowledge and approbation. Nothing can be further from the truth. Previous to the first conference in 1773, Mr. Wesley could not have exerted much influence over these infant societies, being himself more than three thousand miles from them, and they, in general, composed of only a few individuals in a place, and scattered over the immense territory of the provinces. And in the year preceding the commencement of the revolutionary war, nearly all amicable communication was cut off between the two countries. Nor can we find, during this period, one word in reference to the existence of Slavery in the American societies, either in his writings, or in those of any of his preachers; so that it is wholly begging the question to assert that there was any Slavery in the Methodist societies before the Revolution, much less that it was there with his knowledge and approbation.

From all the circumstances in the case, it must be evident that Slavery found its way into the Methodist societies not only without

the knowledge of John Wesley, but even that of his assistant, Francis Asbury. For during the seven years of the revolutionary war, all friendly intercourse between the two countries had ceased; and in 1778, all the English preachers had returned to the mother country, except Mr. Asbury; and he, it is well known, was confined mostly to the small State of Delaware; so that by these events, even his advice and control were almost wholly lost to the rising societies. Consequently, the extension of the cause and the founding of societies were committed to young and inexperienced men, most of whom had, as yet, been taught the way of the Lord but very imperfectly. For in this great revival of religion, some, almost immediately on their conversion, were sent, not only to preach, but to found churches, receive members and administer—except the ordinances—the entire discipline. Almost all of these young preachers had been also born and raised in the midst of Slavery, and, with the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson, had only an imperfect idea that Slavery was wrong. They had "never read a book on the subject, nor had they reflected much upon it."

The forty-eight preachers who had been received into the itinerancy during the war, belonged almost exclusively to this class. All the conferences which were held from 1776 to 1787 were held in what are now denominated the slaveholding states. So entirely was early Methodism confined to this section of our country, that from 1777 to 1783 there was not one appointment of a preacher north of some parts of New-Jersey; and out of a membership of about 14,000, as reported at the conference of the latter year, only about 2,000 resided in what are now called the free states. And further, in 1779, mainly on account of the ordinances, the more southern preachers, amounting to far more than one-half of the entire body, seceded, holding a separate conference in Fluvanna, in Virginia; while Mr. Asbury held one consisting of only seventeen preachers, in Kent county, state of Delaware. Each conference passed its own resolutions, stationed its preachers, and exercised discipline over their respective societies. This separation continued during the seventh and eighth conferences, or parts of 1779–80. And, although in May of the latter year, a reconciliation took place, so far as to suspend the ordinances, and admit Mr. Asbury into the seceding conference, yet the two bodies did not meet at the same time and place until the year 1784. And even during this interval, there is sufficient evidence that the administration of the general assistant was received with considerable caution.

In 1779, when the question was asked, "Who of the preachers are willing to take the stations this conference shall place them in, and continue till the next year?"—out of thirty-two members of which the whole conference was composed, sixteen only replied in the affirmative. Those who did not, held a separate conference in Virginia.

But it was when Mr. Asbury met the two conferences in one body, for the first time, that we heard anything on the subject

of Slavery. The fair probability then is, that Slavery had been introduced into the Methodist societies by this separated conference in Virginia; and that when the preachers came back, placing themselves again under the supervision of Mr. Asbury and the conference of Baltimore, that they brought, of course, their members with them —some of whom had been, already, received as slaveholders.

This great evil, then, having been admitted in this way into the Church, the entire conference of 1780 took immediate measures to extirpate the mere sprinkling of it, which had come into her communion, and also, wholly to prevent its further introduction. And for this purpose, they sent forth to the infant societies and to the world, that noble Declaration against Slavery, which we shall soon adduce, and which should ever be regarded as the only clue to the right interpretation of all their subsequent rules and measures on this question of Slavery.

But before we present it, it seems proper to review the whole ground, that we may have a right appreciation of the true import of that Declaration. It is acknowledged, that, to the early Methodists, John Wesley was their great prototype. They regarded him as an honored and extraordinary minister of the Lord Jesus. They embraced his theological views, followed his ecclesiastical polity, and adopted the whole of his moral discipline. Consequently, there is no probability that they would have done anything in religious matters which they knew was contrary to his expressed and published will.

Now, it should be remembered, that only six years before this time, he had published his "Thoughts on Slavery," which must have been well known at least to all the older and more influential preachers. In that tract, after having set forth its doctrine, Mr. Wesley applies its teachings to slaveholders, specifically—whether they were such by purchase, inheritance or otherwise—in the following unmistakable words:—

"And this equally concerns every gentleman that has an estate in our American plantations; yea, *all slaveholders of whatever rank and degree;* seeing men-buyers are exactly on a level with men stealers. Indeed, you say, 'I pay honestly for my goods; and I am not concerned to know how they are come by.' Nay, but you are; you are deeply concerned to know they are honestly come by. Otherwise you are a partaker with a thief, and are not a jot honester than he. But you know they are not honestly come by; you know they are procured by means nothing near so innocent as picking of pockets, housebreaking, or robbery upon the highway. You know they are procured by a deliberate series of more complicated villainy (of fraud, robbery and murder) than was ever practised either by Mohammedans or Pagans; in particular, by murders of all kinds; by the blood of the innocent poured upon the ground like water.*

*A graphic and truthful description of this trade is from the pen of Hon. Horace Mann, in the House of Representatives. Speaking of Great Britain who introduced Slavery in her colonies, he says, "She broke into the Ethiop's home,

Now, it is your money that pays the merchant, and through him the captains and the African butchers. You, therefore, are guilty, yea, principally guilty, of all these frauds, robberies and murders. *You are the spring that puts all the rest in motion;* they would not stir a step without *you;* therefore, the blood of all these wretches who die before their time, whether in their country or elsewhere, lies upon your head. 'The blood of thy brother' (for whether thou wilt believe it or no, such he is in the sight of Him that made him) 'crieth against thee from the earth,' from the ship, and from the waters. O! whatever it costs, put a stop to its cry before it be too late; instantly, at any price—were it the half of your goods, deliver thyself from blood-guiltiness! Thy hands, thy bed, thy furniture, thy house, thy lands, are at present stained with blood! Surely it is enough: accumulate no more guilt; spill no more the blood of the innocent! Do not hire another to shed blood; do not pay him for doing it! Whether you are a Christian or no, show yourself a man! Be not more savage than a lion or a bear!

"Perhaps, you will say, 'I do not buy my negroes; I only use those *left* me by my father.' So far is well; but is it enough to satisfy your own conscience? Had your father, have you, has any man living, a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting Revelation aside. It cannot be that either war or contract can give any man such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen. Much less is it possible that any child of man should ever be *born* a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air: and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.

"If, therefore, you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor the revealed will of God) render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice."

Now, these were the published and the known views of Mr. Wesley, whom the Methodists of that day revered as next only to the inspired apostles. His words need no comment. They go to

as a wolf into a sheep-fold at midnight. She set the continent aflame, that she might seize the affrighted inhabitants as they ran shrieking from their blazing hamlets. The aged and the infant were left to the vultures; but the strong men and the strong women she drove, scourged and bleeding to the shore. Packed and stowed like merchandise between unventilated decks—so close that the tempest without could not ruffle the pestilential air within—the voyage was begun. Once a day the hatches were opened to receive food and disgorge the dead. Thousands and thousands of corpses which she plunged into the ocean from the decks of her slave ships, she counted only as the tare of her commerce. The blue monsters of the deep became familiar with her path-way; and not more remorseless than she, they shared her plunder. At length the accursed vessel reached the foreign shore. And there, the monsters of the land—fiercer and feller than any that roam the watery plains—rewarded the robber by purchasing his spoils. For more than a century this traffic raged, during which the clock of eternity never counted one minute that did not witness the death of some father or mother of Africa."

the entire root of this evil. He places the holder of slaves—whether by inheritance or otherwise—on the level with the trafficker, or rather, below them; for it was the gains of the former, which were the main "*spring* that puts all the rest in motion." Now, is there even a shadow of probability, that those who had followed John Wesley so closely in all other matters, should have departed from him so widely in this? And that, too, at the time of their ecclesiastical organization, or indeed, at any other time? Who, then, can believe that they should have made special provision to allow, or to tolerate in their societies, that which he had so sweepingly denounced? We say that it is morally impossible that they should. Everything in the history of the times, and in their own character, is against such a supposition.

In accordance, therefore, with the views, and in the spirit of their pattern, the conference in Baltimore of 1780, put forth their first Declaration against Slavery:—

"*That Slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man and nature, and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours.*"

So, then, Slavery, and certainly slaveholding—whether by inheritance or otherwise—in the judgment of our founders, was contrary to the laws of God—the Scriptures—that is, it was a sin. 2. Contrary to those of man—an unnatural state, one dreaded by the whole species. 3. And nature—for it blighted and blasted every section of the Lord's earth over which it had spread itself. 4. It was hurtful to society—no good state of which could exist where it was, no reciprocity of interests, no public spirit, nor general schools. 5. Conscience unseared and unimpaired at once rejected it. 6. Pure religion could not exist with it, for it nullified marriage and the Sabbath, and by repelling slave testimony, it raised a screen in the Church to cover up every abomination. 7. In one word, it repudiated the golden rule—the law and the prophets, and every moral bond which keeps society together.

This was the testimony of our fathers against Slavery—a noble testimony—worthy the men who made it, worthy of the gospel which they preached, and worthy of the infant churches which they were then planting. It was put forth in the South—in the seat of Slavery—at the zenith of the foreign slave trade, and in the midst of the revolution, when a timid, worldly policy would have suggested silence; and at a time when almost every man's hand was raised against them. There was a moral sublimity in the attitude of those early Methodists. As ambassadors from God, they published abroad their entire sentiments on the question of Slavery. They did not handle the word of God deceitfully, nor keep back any ungracious truth from the people, which they deemed profitable for them. They did not wait till public opinion was prepared to receive their principles. They were in advance of public opinion. Circumstances at this period did not mould them; but, on the contrary,

they set themselves to the remodelling of the world and its institutions—especially to the "spreading of holiness throughout the land." None were more willing to obey Cæsar in all that belonged to him. But then Cæsar must keep on his own side of the brook, and not invade the temple or the territory of the Lord; nor attempt to trammel them in the carrying out all the requisitions of the gospel. The Church has rights as well as the State. God, who ordained the powers that be, ordained, also, those of the Church, and intended that in her onward course of reform she should raise the lowly, level the high, straighten the crooked, and make the rough places plain.

During the subsequent years immediately following, the conference bore the same testimony, and continued the same means for the extirpation of Slavery. But these merely admonitory measures did not seem to have fully effected their designed object. For about the time of the Christmas conference of 1784, when the societies were to be organized into an Independent Church, the whole ecclesiastical polity was again thoroughly reviewed; and the whole Discipline of the infant Church was compared with the larger Minutes of Mr. Wesley: "Composing a form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and other members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." *

At this conference, the most effectual measures were taken to rid the Church, at once and forever, from every vestige of Slavery; and for this purpose, in answer to the forty-second question of the new Discipline, as compared with the large Minutes, it was asked:—

"What method can we take to extirpate Slavery?

"*Ans.* We are deeply conscious of the impropriety of making new† terms of communion for a religious society already established, except on the most pressing occasion. And such we deem the practice of holding our fellow creatures in Slavery. We view it contrary to the golden rule of God—on which hang all the law and prophets—and the inalienable rights of mankind, as well as the principles of the revolution, to hold in the deepest abasement, in a more abject Slavery than is perhaps to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are capable of the image of God.

"We, therefore, think it our most bounden duty, to take immediately some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us. And for that purpose, we add the following to the rule of our society."

Here follow the rules, the purport of which was, that there should be a full and entire emancipation of every slave in the possession of the members of the Church, and that such "An instrument should be legally executed and recorded." Then the third clause of the rule adds:

* Title page of Discipline: New-York, 1789.

† On reflection, we think our founders would have seen, that in this apologetical phrase, they had conceded too much. For it could have been no new term to require their members to observe the most obvious principle of Christian morality. For the very constitution of the Christian Church required it, without a specific rule in the matter.

"In consideration that these rules form a new term of communion, every person concerned, who will not comply with them, shall have liberty quietly to withdraw himself from our society within twelve months succeeding the notice given as aforesaid; otherwise, the assistant shall exclude him in the society."

4. "No person so voluntarily withdrawn, or excluded, shall ever partake of the Lord's Supper with the Methodists, till he complies with the above requisitions."

5. "No person holding slaves, shall in future be admitted to our society, or to the Lord's Supper, till he previously complies with these rules concerning Slavery."

And then in a *nota bene*, they immediately add:—"These rules are to affect the members of our society no farther than they are consistent with the laws of the State in which they reside." And the brethren in Virginia "were allowed two years from the notice given, to consider the expedience of compliance or non-compliance with these rules." These, then, were the existing rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church at her organization in 1784.

Here it should be observed, that the rules for the continuance of membership in the above case, required a bill of emancipation "*legally executed and recorded.*" In some States, however, it was "inconsistent with the laws," to do this; for as there was no law in the matter, consequently there could have been no legal process, and no legal book of record. In the State of Virginia there were peculiar difficulties; hence, the conference gave them two years to comply with the rule.

Now, as already observed, what the rules required, was a legal and recorded emancipation, which in some States could not be obtained. But this legal emancipation must not be confounded—as many do—with a *moral and real* emancipation; hence, the conference made exceptions, where it was inconsistent with the laws of the State. The former could not be effected in some cases; but the latter could be at all times, and in every place: and consequently, there could be no exceptions to its requirements. For the conference never assumed the popish power of granting a dispensation to continue in sin, nor could they measure moral obligation by geographical or state lines. They certainly never intended that an iniquitous State law should release the church member from his moral obligation to obey God in giving to his fellow creature "that which was just and equal" for his work—or from his obligation to "execute justice and judgment" to all men—nor from the requirements of the Church he had joined, to aid her in "extirpating that abomination from among them."

For the conference knew, and every body should know, that no law can prevent the reputed master from announcing to his former slave, that he disclaims all right of property in him, and that he discards, as anti-scriptural, all the authority which the slaveholding laws may give over him; thereby, immediately and forever, clearing himself of the sin of Slavery, before God and in the face of the world.

Can any power under Heaven prevent the white man from treating the black man as a human being, a Christian, a brother? Can the State prevent him in some way, from giving the reputed slave fair, honest wages for his work—a right to his wife and to his children—or liberty to remove to a State where he can enjoy full freedom? Or, if the freedman chose to remain with him, the former master, as a guardian, can protect him from cruel and oppressive State laws. Where there is a will, there is a way. All these, the Methodist Episcopal Church, at her organization, required from all her members. And thus she never could have excepted any of them, in any State, from the moral obligation of giving a true and a real emancipation; because, God's word never excepted any from the doing of "that which was right and just." The letter and spirit of her rules require the same at the present day. Where there can not be a legal and civil emancipation, the Church supposes, in effect, the relation of guardian and ward, the protector and the protected; but her organic law never intended to sanction the relation of slaveholder and slave, either morally or ecclesiastically. For even the intention of *enslaving* a man, woman or child—and much more the actual holding of them in that relation—was deemed a disqualification for membership. It was the practice of Slavery—the holding of slaves, not the mere buying and selling—which they aimed to extirpate. It was the real, living, laboring, soul-degrading practice which they *abhorred*.—That practice, whether it was carried on by a professor or a sinner, by a preacher or a bishop, whether in Virginia, New-York, or the Carolinas, whether the claim came through a bequest, by purchase, or inheritance. What folly it is to lose sight of the subject, and to lay the whole stress upon its accidents. Buying and selling are the mere accidents of Slavery, which may or may not exist, and still there may be Slavery of the most horrid character.. The subject, the thing itself, that which embodies the iniquity, and that which our organic law prohibits, is the holding and using of a human being as property—the getting of *work without paying* for it. This was that which constituted the sin of Slavery, in estimation of our fathers. This latter, is the real pith and germ of Slavery, and it is as Mr. Wesley says, "the *spring* that puts all the rest in motion,"— the traders and the kidnappers.

In a word, during the Revolution, Slavery crept into our Church; in 1780, the conference sent forth their first declaration against it; these admonitory measures, however, failing in their object, in 1784, at her organization, the Methodist Episcopal Church took an "effectual method" to sweep away the last vestige of Slavery from her border. And when our Church was founded, this effectual method, this entire prohibition of slaveholding, was then the law of the Church—a law, at that time, standing out in its full force, unimpaired, unrepealed, and unsuspended.

These rules were then the materials out of which the general rule on Slavery was subsequently formed. Indeed, the entire extinction of all slaveholding, as set forth in Wesley's "Thoughts on Slavery,"

and in the declaration of sentiment by the conference of 1780, was the object, the pith, and the purpose—the whole scope and design of all that the early Methodists ever said or wrote on this subject. And further, the spirit, the *animus* of these rules, is really the only clue to a right interpretation of the present general rule. Without reference to these, no one ever can give any thing like a clear and satisfactory solution to the subsequent legislation of our Church upon Slavery.

This, then, was the original basis on which our Church was founded. Mr. Lee himself, the southern historian, acknowledges all this, and affirms [page 101] "That it was founded with a number of express rules, which stipulated *that Slavery should not be continued in the Church.*" And to this original basis, it is the bounden duty of every Methodist to bring her back. In the words of the old discipline, "Let this be continued from year to year, till the desired end be accomplished." We readily allow that these rules were not fully carried out; they were, however, in very many instances, as we shall show.

But in the constitutional argument, however, we lose nothing in conceding that this "effectual method" to rid the Church of Slavery was never fully or generally carried out. The early Methodists, in good faith, tried to enforce it. They did enforce it in hundreds of instances, as I have heard old Methodists of that day affirm from their own knowledge, and as may still be seen in the unprecedented emancipations which took place between 1790 and 1800. But they met with difficulties, with great difficulties, as all will in attempting to abolish an enormity of such ramifications, and of such gigantic proportions. They hesitated; they "gave time for consideration," and soon suspended the rule for a limited term, "to a future conference." But they never repealed it; they never compromised it; but after struggling for twenty or more years to enforce it, they seem to have allowed it to go by default. This prohibitory rule was never suspended indefinitely. And ever since, at least nominally, the Methodist Episcopal Church stands protesting against the continuance of slaveholders in her communion, and asking, every day, by the thousands of disciplines which she sends forth every year, "what shall be done to extirpate Slavery?" Does this look like making constitutional provision for its continuation, under any circumstances, in the Church?

CHAPTER III.

ORGANIZATION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH. HER CONSTITUTION NON-SLAVEHOLDING.

HISTORY OF THE RULE ON SLAVERY—IN WHAT HER CONSTITUTION CONSISTS—MAIN QUESTION STATED—TERMS DEFINED—DESIGN OF THE RULE—SUBJECT TREATED PHILOLOGICALLY—ETHICALLY—HISTORICALLY.

THE organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the acknowledged nationality of the United States, were nearly contemporaneous. After a struggle of seven years, the young republic took her station among the nations of the earth; and the Methodist societies having been served for eighteen years by lay preachers, and consequently destitute of the ordinances, were formed into an ecclesiastical body, enjoying all the privileges of a Christian Church. This important event took place on Christmas, 1784, the object of which was "to reform the Continent, and spread Bible holiness through these lands."

As has been already stated, during the confusion of the revolution, when the reception of members, and the administration of the discipline were mostly in the hands of the recently converted and inexperienced ministers, Slavery found its way into the American Methodist societies. At this Conference (1784*), when the foundation of her ecclesiastical polity was about to be laid, special and vigorous measures were immediately taken to extirpate that which had been introduced, and to guard against its future introduction. For this purpose, the entire following clause was shortly afterwards added to Mr. Wesley's original general rules.

*I have placed the general rule on Slavery as early as 1784, on the authority of the fifth edition of the discipline, now before me; the title page of which reads thus: "A form of Discipline, for the ministers, &c. of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, considered and approved at a Conference held in Baltimore, Maryland, on Monday, 27th of December, 1784: in which Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury presided. The Fifth Edition. New-York: Printed by William Ross, in Broad-street, 1789." By the title page of this discipline, it would appear that the rule had been formally "considered and approved" in the Christmas conference of 1784. But it is not very probable that it was embodied in the discipline in the above words, until two and a half years afterwards—until 1787. The discipline of this year has never been recovered. But it is evident that the rule, as above quoted, was in this edition; for in the edition of 1789, it was incorporated with the other general rules, in the very words which we have quoted over the signatures of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, and dated May 28, 1787.

"*The buying or selling the souls and bodies of men, women or children, with an intention to enslave them.*"

Whether this addition was made by the order of Mr. Wesley, or at the suggestion of Dr. Coke; or whether it originated wholly with the American societies, cannot, at this time, be determined; but the probability is, that it was with Mr. Asbury and the conference with him in Baltimore, who, four years before, had put forth that noble declaration of sentiment against Slavery.

The truth is, this rule and all others in regard to Slavery at this time, were self-imposed by the southern Methodists upon themselves; some of whom might have been formerly slaveholders, and all of whom had been more or less acquainted with the entire system. For at this period, it must be remembered, our societies were almost entirely confined to the present slaveholding States. On account of the war, Methodism had spread but very little to the north or east; even one year after the peace—in 1785—there were but five places to which preachers were appointed, situated in what are now called the free States; and of about 15,000 members, of which our Church was at that time composed, nearly 14,000 were within the bounds of the present slaveholding States. Southern anti-slavery Methodists, who are really such, always have been found to be among the most thorough, constant, and energetic opponents to Slavery. And we believe the day is not very distant, when men will arise from among themselves, who will take the right ground on this question, and who will put to silence and to shame those northern ones, who so long have followed a wavering, inconsistent, and contradictory course.

The evil of Slavery must have been great in their estimation, to have caused them to insert such an entire addition to rules which had been the standard among Methodists from the beginning, and which had been set forth by their founder as the moral code of Christianity. But Slavery was a form of iniquity with which Methodism had never before come in collision; and it required a new and special rule to meet the emergency of the case, and to exclude it from the new and rising community. And in this entire investigation, we should ever keep in view what was the object, the scope, and design of this special rule. This seems to have been almost wholly overlooked. Many have regarded merely the words. It was not specifically against the traffic, as it has been so strangely affirmed. For at that time, there was properly no such thing as the domestic slave trade; there was, indeed, the buying and selling of slaves in the town or in the neighborhood, but the domestic slave trade did not arise till thirty years after this—till after the purchase of Louisiana, in 1803. And further, in such transfers at that day, there was nothing opprobrious in them. And in regard to the African slave trade, who can believe that the few poor and God-fearing Methodists of that period were so eager to join the marauders in Africa, that a special rule was necessary to restrain them from it? Nor was it merely to "legalize slaveholding by inheritance." This is a new

invention to sustain a bad cause, and one that is really not worth answering. Now, the object of this special rule was not for any of these purposes, but, on the contrary, it was instituted as it is every where expressed, "to extirpate" the Slavery that had crept in unawares, and to exclude forever, hereafter, "this abomination,"—as they then called Slavery—from the precincts of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The organic law or constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, is said to be included in her articles of religion, general rules, and restrictive regulations; and the several parts of these are to be taken as a whole, a unit; and they are always to be interpreted as in entire agreement with themselves. Or rather, the two last, being derived from the first, are always to be construed in agreement with the first; and in all doubtful cases, in regard to their true meaning, they are to be interpreted by the articles of religion, and consequently, the holy scriptures, whence these articles are derived; for no one can suppose that our founders ever intended to insert any thing in the general rules which they thought to be contrary to the bible. And our articles of religion, which we thus receive as the essential constitution of our Church, affirm, that "The holy scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation: so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man"—so that the moral code of our Church is never to be construed contrary to the holy scriptures, but always in agreement with them. Consequently, the scriptures are to guide us in the interpretation of the general rule.

We now approach the main question. *Does the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church allow, under any circumstances, to her members the practice of slaveholding?* Was it the mind or intention of our founders that slaveholders might be continued in the Church, while they still retained their slaves? We have thus stated the case fully and strongly, avoiding the mystifications of exceptions and circumstances. And to this statement there can be but two answers. We take the negative; that the founders of our Church never intended that Slavery, in any case, should be allowed to exist within her sacred borders.

But here, before we attempt to prove our position, we must define the terms employed in this investigation, or in other words, we wish to show what Slavery is, and who is a slaveholder. This is very necessary, for in no controversy has there been such an ocean of mist and confusion as in the present one. Terms have been used so vaguely, in such an indefinite sense, that good men have been fighting each other in the dark. John Wesley denominated Slavery to be "execrable villainy:" again he says, "I strike at the root of this complicated villainy, I absolutely deny all slaveholding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice." A disciple of his, Dr. Fisk, speaks of it, on the contrary, as of a "present rightful authority," and Bishop Hedding has said that one "may hold a slave by the golden rule." The first Methodists said, "That Slavery was

contrary to the laws of God, man and nature;" but many among the modern ones affirm, that simple slaveholding should be no bar to an admittance into the Church. Then again, we have many distinctions; "sinful and innocent Slavery," "voluntary and involuntary, mercenary, and even benevolent slaveholding."

Now, all these positions cannot be true. Certainly, our language is not so poor that it cannot afford us words through which we can express our meaning. And as we seem to be called upon to fight the battle of freedom over again, let us define our terms at once. Truth discriminates; error confounds things. What then is Slavery, and who, then, is a slaveholder?

Webster defines a slave to be—"A person who is wholly subject to the will of another; one who has no freedom of actions, but whose person and services are wholly under the control of another." This is a good general definition. We will now give two legal ones of Slavery, which, without any material variations, obtain throughout the slaveholding States: "A slave is in the power of his master, to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry and labor. He can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire any thing but what must belong to his master." This, without any figure of speech, is the absorption of one human being into another; for if the slave have hands, they are not his own—his body is not his own. Indeed, in reference to the slave, *his* and *my* are mere figures of speech. He can possess nothing. To use himself for his own good, is a crime. To keep what he earns, is stealing. To take the management of himself for himself, is insurrection, and punishable with death.

The relation, *per se*, gives the right of entire property to the master, to use the slave for his own exclusive benefit. He can task him, let him, lease or sell him. The master is entitled by the relation, to obedience without bounds, to the fruits of the slave's labor, and even the children of his body. And the slave, on his part, is subjected by this relation, in the words of southern law, "*To absolute obedience, respect without bounds, and a subordination not susceptible of any modification or restriction. There must be no appeal from the decision of the master.*" Consequently, every slave, male or female, is obliged to obey every command, good or bad, and to yield to every act of lust and power which the master may enjoin. When all this is done, the relation is not abused, nor its legitimate bounds transcended, but all this is done within its constitutional limits. All these correlative rights and obligations are essential to its very being. Take any of them away, and it ceases to be slavery. There are those, no doubt, who do not claim all that Slavery gives them, but while they sustain the relation, they are a part of the whole system, and sustain others in claiming all that the system allows.

The leading or essential attribute in the relation, is that of *property in a human being.* This right of property, as one may easily see, at once subverts every other relation which God has established

among human beings. It subverts the social, domestic, civil and even religious relations, to wit: the slave's reputed wife is not his own—she belongs to another, her master, who owns her person—and without violating the relation in the least, can use her as he pleases. The slave's children are not his own. In civil society he is nobody; but a thing. The relation requires him to render to his master "*absolute obedience, without modification or restriction.*" Now, without a figure or exaggeration, does not this put the master in the place of God, as it regards the slave? If, at any time, the slave should obey God in opposition to his master, in this case he violates the requirements of the relation, and if the master should not require all the above, it is a mere concession on his part; the relation gives him the right.

Now, this is the Slavery and the relation which the venerable founders of our Church declared to be *contrary to the laws of God*, without regard to the modification of circumstances. And this is the Slavery which exists at this hour, and ever must exist while it is Slavery. A supposed "Slavery only in name, in which there is no oppression, in which there is justice or righteousness," is an impossibility; it is a misnomer, a contradiction. We might as well talk of fire in which there is no heat—of frost in which there is no coldness, as to talk of Slavery in which there are no oppression and injustice.

How it is to be lamented that learned ministers, good brethren, who love the cause of humanity, and the reputation of the Church to which they belong, should use terms in such a sense which actually gives the most efficient strength and permanancy to that very system which they say they are trying to pull down. They talk of Slavery under certain circumstances, which circumstances, according to their showing, at least in some cases, forms a condition which is really no Slavery at all, but something of a different character, partaking of the relation of guardian and ward, the protector and the protected. Yet, the misapplication of these terms do immense mischief. It was this, no doubt, which the good bishop meant, when he said "one could hold a slave by the golden rule." Why then do not these brethren use the words Slavery and slaveholder in their grammatical and in their legal sense? Why should they mislead by this entire misapplication of terms, and give the infidel and others, who understand the words in their legitimate sense, an occasion to spurn a religion, which, according to their showing, outrages every principle of natural justice? The words Slavery and slaveholder are as capable of clear definitions as any other words in the language. Why then do they not use them in their true and grammatical meaning? For the condition of guardian and ward is as far from that of slave and slaveholder, as heaven is from hell. If they mean the former, why not say so? and if the latter, why should they be offended to be called pro-slavery? For if these brethren mean that a member of the Church can legally hold and use a human being as a slave, and still continue in the Church, they are certainly *for* Slavery, for its continuance, under present circum-

stances; and pro-Slavery is certainly the most appropriate name to designate those who hold such opinions. To say they are anti-slavery, that is, merely opposed to Slavery, is not saying any thing more than nineteen-twentieths of all the slaveholders in the land. It is too general to mean any thing. A learned judge once said, "he was always fearful of those witnesses who deal in generalities."

We have thus labored to define the terms which we use in this investigation. We have dwelt on them for some time, from a full conviction, that the misapplication of the terms Slavery, slaveholder, and the mystification of "certain circumstances," employed by prominent men in our Church, have been more detrimental to the cause of religion and of emancipation, than the most pro-Slavery doctrines could possibly have been. The tree is known by its fruits. What then has been the tendency of this indefiniteness?

1. It has nearly obliterated all the lines by which we were accustomed to designate the boundaries between justice and injustice. It has diffused such a mist and haze over the whole subject of Slavery, and the duties of Christians, and of slaveholders themselves, that almost every thing in regard to duty has become uncertain. We seem to grope as if we had no eyes. We are left as if we had no revelation in this matter, and that every one is at liberty to infer his duty as he pleases, or to define such justifying circumstances as will best suit him.

2. While all acknowledge and even bewail the evil of Slavery, every one fancies himself *within* the "circumstances which free him from the charge of any immorality in the matter." And thus it turns out that there is not a slaveholder, from the most indulgent master to the worst negro trader, or the veriest Legree, of Uncle Tom celebrity, who cannot, by the misapplication of these terms, persuade himself that he is within the limit of those justifying circumstances, which these brethren, doctors and conferences say, "clear him from any participation in sinful slaveholding."

3. It has transferred the blame from the individual to the State, to the system, or at least to those who at first brought slaves to this country. The present slaveholder, in his estimation, at this time, can do nothing; and where there is no ability, there can be no blame. So that while there is an enormous amount of sin, there is, at the same time, no sinner. God's laws are violated, but no one is accountable for it, unless it be the State, or the system; and these are both impersonalities without conscience, and without a moral existence. And thus God's word is made of no avail through their indefiniteness and vague generalities.

We return now to the examination of the general rule—the moral constitution of our Church on Slavery. And for the sake of order, we will treat it philologically, ethically and historically.

At this point, let us again inquire more fully, what was the design in making the rule at all? It had some design. What was it to have accomplished? To understand the scope or design of a document, is almost to understand the whole of it. It is the clue to

unravel that which may be entangled; or, it is like the main direction to the traveler, who is surrounded by various and winding roads. "The scope," one has well observed, "is the soul or spirit of a book or document. And that being once ascertained, every argument and word appears in its right place, and is perfectly intelligible; but if the scope be not duly considered, every thing becomes obscured, however clear and obvious its meaning may really be."*

What, then, was the design in originating the rule? It was not, certainly, to establish Slavery. For this could have been better accomplished by saying nothing about it, as they do at the far South. It was not, as was argued at the last general conference, to give Methodists the "right to hold a slave by inheritance," for this plan would appear very absurd and contradictory: to make provisions to perpetuate it, and then to extirpate it at the same breath. Most evidently, the whole scope and design of the rule, was to abolish the Slavery which had crept into the Church, and to exclude, forever, its further introduction. This was the pith and purpose of the rule.

The rule under consideration was special: it had never been in Mr. Wesley's original ones. It was framed to meet a specific and local case in our country; an evil with which Methodism had never before came in contact. And as it came from those who originated it, it stands in the fifth edition of the discipline, printed 1789, and reads thus: "*The buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women or children, with an intention to enslave them.*" In the discipline of 1792, it reads, "The buying or selling of men, women or children with an intention to enslave them." And in 1808, the rule was mutilated and altered to the present reading: "The buying and selling of men, women and children with an intention to enslave them." Dr. Robert Emory, in his History of the Discipline, says, "For this alteration (if, indeed, it be not a purely typographical error) no authority is found in the journal of the general conference." This, however, was no typographical error, as the veriest tyro of the type can see. The mutilation of so short a sentence by the throwing out of more than one-fifth of its words, and by the substitution of two other words, of entirely different meaning, could never have been such an error.

In its original and only authoritative form, the rule prohibited the purchase of one single human being who was to be held in Slavery. But in the latter and unauthorized form as it now stands, it does not do this, at least not so clearly; but it seems to be only the prohibition of engaging in slave trading. And so the rule was construed by some at the last general conference. At what time and by whom this change was made we cannot tell. Certainly our founders could not have done it. But this mutilation in favor of Slavery is only one among the many encroachments which this dark spirit has been making upon us for the last forty years, until our Church is now announced in open general conference—to the disgrace of Christian-

*Horne's Introd.

ity, the scorn of European Christians, and the contempt of the civilized world—to be "constitutionally, historically and administratively, a slaveholding Church." It is true the contradictory expletive, "though anti-slavery," is often thrown in the same sentence, but what it can mean in this connection, who can tell? For how can a religious, or any other community, be properly anti-slavery, in any right sense of that word, who have retained Slavery among them for seventy years; who have increased the number of their slaves from tens to tens of thousands; who, while Slavery is going on in full career, wish all, everywhere, to let it alone; and who will not even require her members to give that which is just and equal to their slaves? While this is the practice, the mere avowal of anti-slavery avails nothing in the estimation of any one, except those only who seem to be deluding themselves by it.

The truth is, we have nearly, perhaps wholly spent the anti-slavery capital which our fathers left us. That our Church was originally anti-slavery, and that she is so still constitutionally, we will soon endeavor to show; but that she is now anti-slavery in her administration, or that she has been so for the last thirty-five years, we positively deny. We say it in grief, but we believe the tendency is rather in the other direction. Apologists for the continuance of Slavery "under present circumstances," are trying to take advantage of their own wrong, trying to make one wrong the justification of another; because a former administration neglected to enforce the rules against Slavery, that the present one may domicile it, and plead "chartered rights" and "constitutional rights" to hold slaves.

To talk of an "Anti-slavery Church," that has "constitutional rights" to hold slaves is certainly confusion confounded. But where are those "constitutional rights" to be found which are said to allow Slavery in the Church? In what book, discipline, or paper are they to be seen? We deny their existence *in toto*. We will go behind the above avowals, and show that Slavery is not chartered, even in the State. That even there the holding of slaves was an unwarrantable assumption, alike unauthorized by any charter or constitution of either God or man.

In the debate in the U. S. Senate, on the Fugitive Slave Bill, Mr. Mason of Virginia, objected to the amendment of Mr. Dayton, providing for a jury trial, because, said he: "If he means by this, that proof shall be brought that Slavery is established by existing laws, it is impossible to comply with the requisition. *For no such law can be produced*, I apprehend, in any of the slave States. I am not aware that there is a *single State* in which the institution is established by positive law." Now if the early Methodists had made constitutional provision for Slavery, they would have been in advance in iniquity of any of the old thirteen States.

"Rights! what Rights! O supreme in mischief,
If wrong give rights."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RULE CONSIDERED PHILOLOGICALLY.

ENSLAVING — ITS GRAMMATICAL MEANING — RULE OF INTERPRETATION — CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE — HOW IT WAS UNDERSTOOD BY OUR FOUNDERS — ONLY CONSISTENT VIEW OF THE RULE.

AGAIN we return to the exposition of the general rule. And in this rule there is really but one prohibition, viz.: that of *enslaving;* for the buying or the selling was not the real prohibition. They were prohibitory, but only so in reference to the real design of the rule, which was the enslaving, the holding of a human being in the condition of a slave. This prohibition was, throughout the whole, the very pith and purpose of the rule.

For if the member bought for the purpose of setting the slave at liberty, the rule was not violated; and as it was impossible to free a slave by selling him, the same conference a little before prohibited the sale of a slave "on any consideration." Now, all depends on the meaning of the words "*to enslave.*" This form of the verb implies: first, either the commencement of an action; or, secondly, the continuation of one already begun. In which sense did the founders of our Church intend the words to be understood? If in the first, that is, to commence the action, then the rule only prohibits the enslaving of those who are free; and the proper terms in that case would have been kidnapping, or taking by capture.

Then, to violate the rule in this sense, the member would be under the necessity of joining a marauding party in Africa, or, by kidnapping, must commit a crime for which the civil law would send him to the penitentiary. It would not even prevent a church member from engaging in the African slave trade; for American traders in that country almost always buy those who are already in a state of Slavery. And again, there is an absurdity in forbidding one to buy or sell a free man; for, as such, he is incapable of being sold or purchased; being free, he is inalienable, until by capture or kidnapping he is made a piece of merchandise. Who, then, can believe that the founders of our Church ever intended the words "to enslave" to be understood in the above sense? — in the sense of commencing the enslaving of a human being by capture or by kidnapping?

If, then, they could not have meant them to be thus understood, they must have used them in the only remaining sense: that is, to *continue* the action already begun; or to prohibit the holding as

slaves those who were already in that condition. This must evidently have been their meaning. For enslaving in general, in every sense, appears to have been the thing aimed at and prohibited by the general rule. Then, according to this, Slavery was not to come into the Church, nor to go out of the Church, and by fair implication and construction, was not to have remained in the Church; for the sole object of the rule was directly and specifically against enslaving—against enslaving in every sense and in every situation. Hereditary Slavery may be viewed as a running stream, the bitter waters of which were not to flow into the holy temple, nor to issue from it, nor to abide in it; for our fathers would not have allowed in the Church the same evil which they denounced out of it; for this would be claiming a monopoly of wickedness in their own community.

If the above rule would not allow a church member to hold one as a slave for whom he had given, perhaps, $800, surely it was never intended to allow the same member to hold one as a slave, born in his house, for whom he had never paid one cent, and from whom he had had already fifteen or twenty years of service for nothing. The founders of our Church were neither casuists nor hair-splitters in morals; but on the contrary, they laid down broad principles, and intended that their words should be understood in their plain and most obvious sense.

The buying and selling is not really that which the rule prohibits. What is it, then? It is the *intention to enslave.* The intention constitutes the praise or the blame, the guilt or the innocence. For instance: I buy—thus far there is no violation of the rule—but I intend to enslave, to hold the person whom I have bought as a slave. Now, the rule is broken. I inherit a slave, with or without my consent. I consider; I determine. I intend to hold the one inherited as a slave. Now in this case, I break the law of the Methodist Episcopal Church. A child is born in my house. John Wesley says, Nature says, God says, that he is free. The whole is now with me, for no State law can make me sin. I think and I intend to hold this child as a slave. So that the words "to enslave," in the rule, really means the holding of one as a slave.

The whole matter is simply this:—the founders of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by the rule in question, did most evidently intend to exclude the little amount of Slavery that had crept in the Church, and by it to keep out, unconditionally and forever, the introduction of any more. That this was their intention, is acknowledged by eminent men at the South, as has already been shown. The Rev. Dr. Winans, in a letter now before me, says in so many words, "At that period [the organization of the Church] the preachers *were practical abolitionists.*" And the Rev. Dr. W. A. Smith, in a speech before the Virginia conference of 1844, says, "*They founded it* [the Church] *on pure abolition grounds.*" It is true these gentlemen immediately affirm that this ground was abandoned, and a compromise was entered into; but whether it were a compromise or an encroach-

ment, their testimony, with a mass of other evidences, proves unequivocally that slaveholding at first was not constitutionally in the Church.

Whether this rule was properly carried out or not, whether it had been enforced for one month or for years, does not in any way, affect or invalidate its constitutionality. It is further evident, that the first preachers in executing the rule met with difficulties: it was a new rule of membership; the people were not fully informed; they hesitated; after a while they suspended it, and although they never repealed it, they never fully executed it. And this fact accounts for the discrepancy between their sayings and doings. But the constitutional rule remained and does remain as at first.

In ascertaining the meaning of our general rule, we need only to follow the most common rule in interpretation: "when in any ordinary composition, a passage occurs of doubtful meaning, the obvious course of proceeding is, to examine what the author has said in other parts of his work on the same subject; to weigh well the force of any particular expression he is accustomed to use; and to inquire what there might be in the occasion or circumstances under which he wrote, tending to throw light on the immediate subject he had in view." *

Following then this rule, let us see what the founders of our Church have said in other places on the subject of Slavery, as explanatory of their meaning of the general rule.

1. In the same year, seven months before the organization of our Church, the conference held in Baltimore, said, "If they [the church members] buy with no other design than *to hold them as slaves*, and have been previously warned, they shall be expelled. And permitted to sell on no consideration." This quotation is valuable, as it must fix their meaning of the words "to enslave" in the general rule. The founders of our Church must certainly have used the words "to enslave" and "to hold as slaves" synonymously, for they were both directed against the same practice, at about the same time, and in the same place. What then can be clearer?

2. Again, in the year (1784), in which the Church was founded, so far from "leaving slaveholding by inheritance untouched," as was asserted in the last general conference, the 43d question reads:

"What shall be done with those who buy or sell slaves, or *give* them away?" *Ans.* "They shall be expelled immediately, unless they buy on purpose to free them."

And further, at the same time, they instituted a series of rules for the entire extirpation of the mere sprinkling of Slavery that had crept into the Church. They preface these rules, thus:

"We, therefore, think it our bounden duty to take some effectual method immediately to extirpate *this abomination* from among us."

Here then follow the rules. How absurd then to suppose while our founders prohibited the buying and selling, that they intended to allow "this abomination" by inheritance. The practice of which, without limitations to persons or to circumstances, was that very thing which they "abominated and abhorred." Now it would

* Horne's Introduction.

certainly seem that these quotations must be sufficiently explanatory of their meaning of the general rule. But—

3. In 1785, the next year after the adoption of the above rules, the conference said, "We do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of Slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means." Here is no Slavery in the abstract; here are no incomprehensible distinctions between Slavery and slaveholding under certain circumstances, between holding by purchase, by bequest, or by inheritance.

The manner of coming into the possession of a slave, could not, with them, alter the nature of Slavery, nor the intention to enslave him. How can slaveholding be contrary to the laws of God, in the case of a worldly man, and allowable in that of a church member? If it is a crime in the one case, is it not equally so in the other?

4. Why was there such a great moral difference between the buying and the selling of a slave, that, on account of the latter, the member was to be expelled immediately? If the slave, before the sale had been held in the same servile condition by the church member, that he would be after the sale, what great moral evil did the one who sold him commit by transferring to another that same power which he himself had been before practicing? It was Slavery in both cases, and the injury to the slave was the same, whether it were inflicted by a saint or a sinner.

Now, the only rational answer that can be given to these inquiries is, that while the slave was with the church members, he was not to be held as a slave. He was to be treated as a being who had rights, and not as a slave. It is really preposterous for the apologists of the present day to assert that Slavery was constitutionally domiciled in our Church at her organization. It is an arrogant assumption, unsustained by the history and the testimony of those times. Twenty-five years ago, F. T. Keys, Esq., late of Washington City, and highly commended in the *African Repository*, and who stated no doubt from his own personal knowledge, thus wrote: "The Methodists formerly denounced Slavery in general terms, as it is now [1836], at the North. They were not allowed by their discipline to continue in the Church if they purchased and *held slaves*. If a member purchased a slave, no matter under what circumstances, the matter was brought before the monthly conference, and it was there determined how many years service at the usual rate of hire, would reimburse the advance of the master. And he was no longer to be a slave, but a servant for that time."

5. And yet other reasons show that the words "to enslave," of the general rule were intended to be understood synonymously with the "holding as a slave," may be easily inferred in many ways. Take the following:—1. How absurd to denounce out of the Church the very practice which is said to have been lawful in it. In the former, it was contrary to the laws of God, an abomination, a disgrace to the species, contrary to conscience and the golden rule. But if it was in the latter, in the Church and by inheritance, then, according

to these modern constitutional expounders, the "slaveholding was allowed by the general rule, the organic law of the Church," and consequently freed the holder from blame. 2. This would really seem like creating a monopoly of Slavery, or an "abomination" in the Church. And instead of making it the means of "spreading bible holiness through the land," it would be, on the contrary, making the Church a cage for this unclean and hateful bird in which to nestle. It would really be making the Church an asylum and a resting-place for Slavery, in which it could multiply and abide forever. 3. And again, according to the preceding exposition, there was an immense difference between the condition of one who was purchased and one who was inherited. The former was to be placed in the relation of servant or ward, and to receive wages, or that which was just and equal for his ransom. But not so the latter. According to the above authorities, the condition of the one who was born in his master's house, and to whom he had given already ten or twenty years' hard service for nothing, was to remain untouched, and he and his children after him were to be transmitted interminably to the fangs of Slavery.

And this seems really to be about the views of some Southern Methodists. The Rev. J. A. Collins objected to the report of the last general conference on Slavery, on the ground that it was contrary to the constitution, or the general rules of the Church. He says "The third answer in the proposed rule provides for giving them (the slaves), such compensation as shall be 'just and equal,' and for their proper treatment. That, (says he), makes a new test. It changes entirely the relation of master and slave. It makes the slave a free man. (Amen, said several.) I am glad you say amen, it gives your endorsement of what I say. I say then, this passage does, in effect, make non-slaveholding a test of membership in our Church."

What a declaration is this! So then the positive commandment of God to "give that which is just and equal," is to be set aside, as if of secondary importance, because, according to this false interpretation, it would conflict with an ecclesiastical rule in making a new test of membership. And thus implying that our founders allowed that members might remain in the Church who did not give that which was just and equal, according to God's word. And further, that they might abrogate the scriptural rule, to establish their own rule, while at the same time, they say that all their rules "are taught in God's written word, which is the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice." Into what absurdities does this dogma of constitutional slaveholding drive its abettors.

Now, where is the person under heaven, not blinded by Slavery, who can bring himself to believe that these holy men who framed our rules on Slavery, and who fastened the rule constitutionally upon the Church, ever intended that any such construction should be put upon it? That while they were preaching against Slavery, writing against it, circulating tracts against it, and petitioning for its

abolishment, that they were, at the same moment, so contradictory in their course, or so indifferent about it, or so in love with it, that they actually made constitutional provisions for its continuance, and so fastened it upon the Church, that future Methodists should not be able to shut it out, unless they unsettled the whole frame work of our ecclesiastical establishment?

Or who can believe that our fathers intended that their rule should be thus construed in opposition to God's word, so that Methodists might be absolved from obeying the most obvious demands of justice? All these suppositions would be equal in atrocity to the dispensing power of the papacy, setting their rule above the common law of heaven, and making God's law of no effect through their ecclesiastical constitution.

And these are only a few of the absurdities into which this teaching of constitutional slaveholding must necessarily lead us.

Now what is said in opposition to this array of evidence? 1. "That Slavery has always been in the Church." But it has never been legalized there; its continuance has ever been under the strongest protest; efforts from the beginning have been put forth to extirpate it; it was wrong that our rules had not been enforced against it years ago. But those who committed the wrong are not authorised to take advantage of this, their own wrong, and justify the continuance of it at this day. This would be like arguing in a circle, making one wrong the reason for committing another one.

Again it is said that Slavery is allowed by implication, thus: "That the general rule by prohibiting the buying and selling, and not at the same time prohibiting the holding of slaves, does thereby authorize slaveholding!" To which we reply: 1. The highest judicial authroity in all countries, including our own until very recently, have long since decided, "That Slavery can only exist by *positive enactment* and is never to be inferred." Thus says the U. S. Supreme Court, 2 *Cranch.* p. 390: "That where rights are infringed, fundamental principles are overthrown, where the general system of laws is departed from, the legislative intention must be expressed with *irresistable* clearness." Is Slavery thus expressed in the general rule?

2. But Slavery is not in the rule even by implication. In Slavery there are many incidents besides holding slaves, such as *Bp. Asbury mentions, "the cutting, skinning and starving of slaves." Now we have just as much reason to say that these are allowed in the rule by implication as we have that holding is allowed there. But 3. To the new doctrine dragged in to sustain Slavery, viz.: "That what the rule does not prohibit it allows." The general rule on profaning the Sabbath forbids working, buying, selling; but at the same time it does not forbid sporting, hunting, fishing—does it thereby authorize these? In conclusion, we say that the above sporting, &c., are authorized by our general rule in precisely the same way and to the same extent that Slaveholding is authorized.

* Journal, vol. 2. p. 273.

CHAPTER V.

THE RULE CONSIDERED ETHICALLY OR MORALLY.

ARTICLES OF RELIGION A PART OF THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR CHURCH — NO ECCLESIASTICAL RULE TO BE INTERPRETED IN OPPOSITION TO THEM — NO NEED OF A CHANGE IN THE GENERAL RULES TO EXCLUDE SLAVERY — THE REQUISITION FOR IT IS ALREADY IN THE CONSTITUTION — SLAVERY FORBIDDEN IN DETAIL — SO UNDERSTOOD BY OUR FOUNDERS — NO SPECIAL LAW IN THE BIBLE TO SUSTAIN SLAVERY — THE LAW OF RECIPROCITY APPLIES TO SLAVES — WHAT CHRISTIANITY TEACHES IN THE PREMISES.

WE have already examined the general rule on Slavery, philologically. We shall now examine it ethically, or perhaps more properly, according to scripture morality. As it has been already stated, the constitution of our Church is comprised in her articles of religion, general rules and restrictive regulations. The first is certainly a part of the constitution of our Church, and indeed it is the principal part. And consequently in every right interpretation, the three are to be taken together as a unit. And if at any time a clause is doubtful in either of the two, they must always be construed in agreement with the first; for it is most certain that our founders never intended that anything should be in the general rules contrary to our articles of religion, and consequently to the scriptures.

In regard to these general rules, our Church says, "all of which we are taught of God in his written word, which is the only rule, and sufficient rule of faith and practice." Here, nothing can be more evident, than that our fathers intended that their ecclesiastical rules should be construed by the scriptures the only and sufficient rule. But where do the scriptures allow the enslaving of a human being? No where. Who then can believe that it was their intention to domicile Slavery in the Church by the general rules? And in all this controversy it is what our founders intended, which alone is of ecclesiastical authority.

It is very remarkable that when the constitutionality of slaveholding by inheritance and otherwise, was so long under discussion in the last general conference, that there was no reference to its constitutionality in view of our articles of religion; but that on the contrary, the whole was argued and passed upon as if there were no such article in existence, or that, in this matter, they had no authority in determining the meaning of the rule on Slavery, when, in the conclusion to these very rules, it is affirmed "that all [these rules]

we are taught of God in his written word." But now there is nothing more natural and consistent than, that where a clause is doubtful in any document, that we should go immediately to the original from which that document is derived, and see what it says upon the doubtful point. So then in this case. Our moral code is derived from the scriptures. But where do the scriptures allow the hereditary and interminable enslavement of a human being? And it should ever be remembered, that for the allowance of Slavery there should be always and everywhere a positive precept; for Slavery being an unnatural state of humanity, always requires positive law for its existence. The judges of Europe and all our judges in this country, until very recently, have decided thus, "that the establishment of Slavery in every case requires positive law for its existence, and that it is never to be assumed, or to be received by implication or construction." Now the same doctrine must obtain, in regard to our discipline. Such a relation as that of master and slave, so abhorrent to nature, and so incongruous to the spirit and genius of religion, certainly requires positive ecclesiastical enactment for its existence. We never should, we never will, allow its legal or constitutional existence among us—by inference—by implication—or by construction. We should hold it, as civil judges do in other countries, to the very letter of the law. We must have positive enactment for it. And it certainly exhibits rather a very low estimate of its horrid character, in the opinion of so many of our chief ministers, that it should be allowed for one moment a place among those things which may be proved by construction. But in the present case we can afford to be liberal, and then disprove its lawfulness among us in any way. But still those who plead, and those who apologize for the continuance of Slavery in the Church, are bound by every rule in law or propriety, to substantiate their claim by positive enactment, in the Bible or in the discipline.

The Rev. J. A. Collins of Baltimore in the last general conference, argues thus.—"If it (Slavery) were an open question, you would find me in the right place and labouring at the strong oar." And again—"It is argued that Christianity is hostile to Slavery. Suppose we admit it; we lose nothing by the admission." But we think far otherwise; for as we have shown, the moral code of our Church and Christianity or the scriptures are one, and the former is always to be construed in agreement with the latter. And in fixing the true meaning of a disputed clause in the general rule, we must allow that the scriptural character of Slavery is an open question, at least so far as to determine what is the meaning of the rule in the discipline. And that if Christianity is hostile to Slavery, the general rule must be equally hostile to it, for our fathers certainly never could have intended that there should be one plank more or less in the latter that there was not in the former.

Thus "Christianity is hostile to Slavery." The rule on Slavery is in perfect agreement with Christianity; therefore the rule is hostile to Slavery to the same extent. Things which agree with one and

the same thing must also agree with each other. Into what palpable absurdities then would the converse of this interpretation drive us?

The same eloquent leader of the South, in meeting the argument, that the general rules were not altered, when the Church required as a test of membership, baptism and confession of faith, thus argues—"We have a constitution. One of our disciplinary rules teaches the necessity of baptism before admission into the Methodist Episcopal church, and another makes a profession of faith, and these are simply a carrying out of the constitution. I submit that these objections do not hold in this case. [Slavery?] There was no necessity for changing the general rule for baptism and a confession of faith before admission into our societies, because the requisitions were in the constitution." This reasoning, in reference to baptism and confession of faith is very good.

And now I purpose to prove by the same kind of argument, that non-slaveholding, whether by inheritance or otherwise, should be equally made a test of membership with the two former, "because the requisition" for it is already in the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For the same scriptures which are recognized by the constitution of our Church, do require non-slaveholding as a test of membership, even more explicitly, more fully, and more authoritatively, than either or both of the other formulas; all of which must appear evident, thus: the essential property of slaveholding is a right of property in man; the absolute subjection of one will to another, the right to compel work without wages, and all the rest. Now every element of which this compound is made up, is condemned by the scriptures, the recognized constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the most thorough, the most frequent, and in the most authoritative manner, viz:

"Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger nor of the fatherless." Deut. xxiv. 17. "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages and giveth him not for his work." Jer. xxii. 13. "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Mat. vii. 12. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Mat. xix. 19. Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." James v. 4.

Now these, and a multitude of other quotations which might have been transcribed, comprise the common law of God's moral government. They were always kept before the people, and will be in force to the end of time. They are repeated almost every where from Moses to the Apostle James. They are not local nor sectional; they belong to the whole family of man, and to every individual in that family, irrespective of nation, color or condition. They are as applicable to the poor slave in the rice swamp of South Carolina, or on the cotton field of Mississippi as to any other individual on God's earth.

Now, therefore, is not the Christian Church of every name, under as high an obligation, to carry out and enforce the plainest, the most obvious commandments of moral right and common honesty, as it is to require the observance of even the essential forms of Christianity? Or, in other words; as baptism and confession of faith are essential parts of Christianity, they should therefore be observed and avowed, as tests of membership. So, also, as *non*-slaveholding, (which is in itself, simply the "giving of that which is just and equal" to all men, and which is only the observing and the keeping of the common law of God, and which common law is an essential part of Christianity), so, therefore, non-slaveholding, together with baptism and confession should be made a test of Church membership, without any alteration of the general rule; because the requisition for it is already in the moral constitution of our Church. If we pay the tithe of mint and cumin, we should not omit the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy and faith. But to prove the rightfulness of non-slaveholding is like trying to prove the truth of an axiom.

And this was most evidently the view which was entertained on this subject, by the founders of our Church, who in express terms say.* "We are deeply conscious of the impropriety of making new terms of communion for a religious society already established, except on the most pressing occasion; and such we esteem the practice of holding our fellow creatures in slavery. We view it as contrary to the golden law of God on which hangs all the law and the prophets," and we may add the general rules, the moral code of our Church. And so they immediately set about making the latter to conform with the former.

They called this a new term of membership; but according to their reasoning it was an old one, as old as the golden law of God, on which our general rule on Slavery was founded. In reality it was a new application of an old rule, to keep out of the Church an evil with which Methodism had never before come into collision. And "the occasion was so pressing" that they could not for a moment hesitate to enforce it; that is, the moral law of God must be enforced, although it should set aside all their former ecclesiastical canons, and oblige them to begin anew, on a basis that was in agreement with God's written word. Unlike the reasons at the late general conference, as soon as they saw that Slavery was hostile to Christianity, they immediately made the ecclesiastical rule conform to the moral obligations of Christianity, even to the immediate rejection of their former rules. This was only a plain common sense course, and such a one, as every Church, professing Christianity is bound to pursue. It is worse than mere folly, it is deistical, or atheistical to interpret the claims of morality without a reference to the Bible. Where would this lead us? To Infidelity, or directly to Romanism, setting up ecclesiastial law above the Divine laws. Both these forms of error, together with the advocacy, or the defense of Slavery under any circumstances, alike set up their respective dogmas rather than the Bible as their standard of moral action.

* His. Discipline, p. 43.

Every Element of Slavery Forbidden in Detail.—But after all an objector may say, "that the general rule does not prohibit slaveholding, nor do the scriptures themselves forbid it in express terms." The same may be said of many other sins of a compounded character, as of war, gambling, suicide, and many others. But observe, *every element* of which these are made up, and Slavery among them, is condemned in the Bible often and repeatedly, in the most solemn and authoritative manner. Suppose a physician after a minute examination should say that every limb and organ of the patient was diseased, that from the sole of the foot to the crown of his head there was no soundness in him, but that he was full of wounds and sores. What would we think of one who, after all this, would affirm, that the man was not sick, because the physician had not said, in express terms that he was sick? But the physican has said, that he was sick, far more thoroughly in his detailed account of him, than he could possibly have done by the use of any two or more express terms. And so it is of Slavery in every case. For every element of which it is made up, is condemned in detail, in the scriptures in the most emphatic and alarming manner. There is not one item in this God-dishonoring compound, that is not denounced under the most tremendous penalties.

Finally, if these objectors will not believe what Moses and the prophets, what Christ and his apostles have said against injustice, extortion, and consequently against Slavery, they would not believe, if one were to rise from the dead and tell them in express terms that slaveholding is sinful.

No Special Law to Sustain Slavery.—But another objector may ask — Is there not a special law between master and slave, apart from the common law of reciprocity between other men, which makes it obligatory on the slave to work without wages; and which, consequently, confers on the master a moral right to require it; and which, also, allows the Church to sanction and to continue this practice? We emphatically say, No; there is no such law. If there is, slaveholders and their apologists are bound to present it. Where is it to be found? By whom was it given? And when and where did God change the common law of Heaven in favor of the slaveholder and against the slave?

It is true that in the New Testament, God requires the Christian slave to serve his heathen master; not that the latter has any right to the service, for there is not the least intimation of such a right on his part. But that the service from the slave should be rendered for a specific purpose, "that the name of God or his gospel be not blasphemed;" that it should not be spoken against by the heathen master, who as yet had no correct idea of Christian morality, and who was not yet, in his present state of ignorance, prepared to act upon its holy principles. And further, it was certainly intended that this unbounded generosity on the part of the slave should be the means of melting down his master, by contrasting it with his own sordid covetousness, and this way to induce him finally to give liberty to the slave.

The whole requirement of the slave's service was on the principle of "turning the other cheek," the doing of good for evil. But this was no more of an acknowledgement that it was right for the master to receive it without compensation, than that the persecutor had a right to give the blow because the Christian was to turn the other cheek.

But it should be observed that this specific purpose was not required of those who had "believing masters," as we have already shown, for there was no need of it, the masters being already Christians. Another class of duties was assigned to them, and such a class too as was really inconsistent with the existence of the relation of master and slave. I. Tim. vi 2.

The enormous error, that God has somehow or somewhere, under "certain circumstances," repealed the common law of his government, or made the slave an exception to it; and that, at the same time, he has released the master from the golden rule of reciprocity, seems to underlie all the reasonings in the north and south, of those who plead for the continuance of Slavery in the Church. They readily acknowledge that free men, or men in general, are entitled to the benefits of God's common law, but they seem strangely to think that the slave is not entitled to it.

Now there was a time when every slave, or the ancestors of every slave, in our country was free, and according to universal concession they were at that time entitled to all the benefits of this law, in common with the entire race of man. But according to the above error, whenever the captor or the kidnapper shall have knocked down a free man, and shall have made him a slave, then, because he is a slave, God withdraws his usual protection from him, places him beyond the pale of his common law, and thus allows the kidnapper who has committed one stupendous wrong upon him, to take the advantage of this, his own wrong, and then to compel this captured man and all his posterity, to work for him, or his assigns, interminably without wages. And again, because this poor slave is now a slave, he is to serve with fear and trembling, not merely in obedience to God on the principle of doing good for evil, but because there is a moral right vested in this kidnapper, arising out of his relation to him as his slave; and then again, to facilitate and legalize the whole business, God releases this kidnapper, and all other slaveholders, from giving to this poor injured slave "that which is just and equal." And then again, to divinely sanction the whole, the Church refuses to him the ordinary rights of membership, and places him under the unwritten code of Slavery, which dooms him and his posterity to hopeless bondage.

Now these are only a few of the results which would arise out of the supposition that God has abrogated his laws against the slave, and that he has instituted special ones to uphold Slavery. Into what palpable absurdities will the plea for the continuance of Slavery, under certain circumstances, drive us?

But no interpretation of scripture can be the right one, which violates the fundamental principles of morality; principles which are so often repeated, and which are so universally enforced throughout the entire scriptures. But the requirements of slaveholding are continually violating these fundamental principles, and must forever violate them while it exists.

Finally, the Bible, as a book of principles. It teaches—

1. The parental unity of the human race.

2. The equality of right among all God's creatures. Not the equality of condition, for no two things are alike, but the equality of right, which by the order of God belongs to every individual. That is, if one is born with but half sight, he should have the right of making the best use of his half, that others have of using their whole sight.

3 That no condition but crime, as John Wesley affirms, can ever deprive any human being of this right. It is in him, and it inures to him as essentially and as universally as extension and ponderosity belong to a stone. No compact of state or country can deprive him of it.

4. That this law of God is universal in its claims. It knows nothing of state lines or geographical limits. It holds that it is as wrong to make a man work without wages on the Mississippi as it is on the Hudson. This law has no class legislation in it. It has not in it one for the master and another for the slave. And finally, it is as immutable as God its author. Thus it is beautifully set forth by Mr. Wesley. "The law of God is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature: yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the most High." And, thank heaven, this law is as much for the poor slave as it is for any creature in God's creation, and consequently they who deprive him of its benefits, must answer for it to his God at the great assizes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RULE CONSIDERED HISTORICALLY.

HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES NECESSARY TO A RIGHT EXPOSITION — SPIRIT OF THE TIMES WHEN THE RULE WAS INSTITUTED — PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM PREDOMINANT — CONGRESS OF 1774 — STATESMEN — JEFFERSON — VIRGINIA — GEORGIA — PRESBYTERIANS — BAPTISTS — IF THE METHODISTS HAD TOLERATED SLAVERY THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN BEHIND ALL OTHERS.

As has been promised, we will consult the history of the times when the rule on Slavery was originated, and see what light it affords in fixing its true meaning. Like the doctrines of the holy scriptures, the meaning of the rule in question does not wholly depend on the criticism of points and particles in grammar. There is a great amount of historical, internal and collateral evidence to substantiate the exposition which we have given of it. Historical circumstances are always a great help, and sometimes absolutely necessary to a correct understanding of an author, or a document. To give a right interpretation, one should be well acquainted with the occasion which gave rise to the writing. What was the design of the author in setting it forth? What was to be accomplished by it? And if a law or rule, what duty was to have been enforced? Or what evil was to have been avoided? Indeed, the design should not only be well considered and known, but also the *animus*, the public spirit which pervaded the community at the time the rule or law was enacted. Not following this rule of interpretation, and not considering the spirit and the history of the period in which the rule in question was formed, many brethren have committed egregious mistakes in their construction of our general rule. They seem to have interpreted the language of our fathers, two generations back or more than seventy years ago, who were surrounded by an atmosphere, at once pure and exhilarant with the spirit of universal liberty, by the general sentiment of the present times, which has been most unhappily poisoned by the miasmal influences of a selfish and money-loving age. It is to be feared that these brethren had not the spirit of their fathers, and consequently were unable rightly to interpret their real meaning.

Methodism commenced her glorious career in our country on the eve of our Revolution. At a time when the principles of civil liberty was stirring up the whole nation, when there was an unusual outcry against tyranny and oppression of every kind. And, al-

though, the poor slave was not considered as he should have been, for he should have been set free at once, yet the reflective influences upon him were neither few nor inconsiderable. For while the Colonists were struggling to assert their own rights, it was impossible for them, not to contrast the claims of the slave with those of their own.

There never was a more propitious field for religious cultivation than that which our country presented at the organization of our Church. The whole land was before them unincumbered, and at the South almost unoccupied. The ecclesiastical burdens and semi-pagan establishments of the old world, either had not been founded, or they had been swept away by the Revolution. The field every where was already white for the harvest.

We boast, and very justly too, of what great things God has done through the agency of the Methodists in the United States, but I have no doubt the future historian of our Church, will tell what greater achievements might have been accomplished, had our Church persisted, as she began, in preaching a full and unrestrained gospel—had she continued as in the apostolic times, to place both master and slave under the same ecclesiastical rule, or even if she had only carried out the requisition of the conference of 1787, "to exercise among them (the slaves) the whole Methodist discipline."

The former state of public opinion on the slave question ought to be more fully known. It would enable us to comprehend the spirit which animated our fathers, and consequently help us the better to interpret the real meaning of their words. We will present a few proofs on this point drawn from the public documents of our country, which were put forth about the time of the organization of our Church.

In the First General Congress of the Colonies in Philadelphia, 1774, in asserting the rights of British America, Thomas Jefferson, laid before them a paper from which the following is an extract:

"The abolition of domestic Slavery is the greatest object of desire in these Colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant State. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves, it is necessary to exclude further importations from Africa. Yet our repeated attempts to effect this have been defeated by his majesty's negative."

The Virginia Convention about the same time adopted the following resolution:

"*Resolved*, We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase any slaves imported by any other person, after the first day of November next."

Most of the Colonies accorded most heartily to this resolution; and the representatives of Darien in the Colony of Georgia, said:

"To show the world that we are not influenced by any interested motives, but by general philanthropy for all mankind of what ever climate, language, or complexion, we hereby declare our disapprobation and abhorrence to the unnatural practice of Slavery in America."

And again, the Continental Congress in 1779, ordered a pamphlet to be published, entitled, "Observations on the American Revolution"—of which the following is an extract:

"The great principle (of government) is, and ever will remain in force, that *men are by nature free*, as accountable to Him who made them. They must be so for so long as we have any idea of Divine justice, we must associate that of human freedom—it is conceded on all hands that the right to be free can never be alienated." Again, about this time, Mr. Jefferson wrote his Notes on Virginia, throughout which he denounces Slavery, and has transmitted to us the abolition feeling which was every where rising in his day.

"I think," he says, "a change is already perceptible since the origin of the present Revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave is rising from the dust, his condition is modifying, and the way I hope, is preparing, under the auspices of heaven, *for a total emancipation.*" In most of the States there were Abolition societies at this time; at the head of which was Benjamin Franklin.

The testimony for the abolition of human Slavery, about the time that our Church was founded, from men high in office and out of office, was so abundant that we could fill books with mere extracts from their writings. We will close, however, this item in our argument by an extract from the speech of Mr. Leigh, in the Virginia Convention of 1832:

"I thought till lately," he said, "that it was known to every body that, during the Revolution, and for many years after, the abolition of Slavery was a favorite topic with many of our ablest statesmen, who entertained with respect all the schemes for its accomplishment."

But it was not only the testimony of statesmen and political bodies which were put forth, but also that of nearly all the ecclesiastical ones of that day. In 1794, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church added a note to the 142d question in the Larger Catechism in the Confession of Faith, which reads as follows:

I. Tim. i. 10—"*The law is made for man-stealers.*" Then the Catechism explains. "This crime, among the Jews, exposed the perpetrator of it to capital punishment, (Exodus xxi. 16); and the Apostle here classes them with sinners of the first rank. The word he uses, in its original import, comprehends all who are concerned in bringing any of the human race into slavery, or retaining them in it. *Hominum fures, qui servos, vel libros abducunt, retinent, vendunt, vel emunt.* '*Stealers of men are those who bring off slaves or freemen, and keep, sell or buy them.*' To steal a freeman, says Grotius, is the highest kind of theft. In other instances we steal only human property, but when we steal or retain men in slavery, we seize those who, in common with ourselves, are constituted by the original grant lords of the earth." This was a noble testimony and covered the whole ground. And the Baptists of that day were even before their brethren, the Presbyterians, in their testimony against Slavery.

At a meeting of the General Committee of the Baptists of Virginia, in 1788, the following point came up:

"Whether a Petition should be referred to the General Assembly, praying that the yoke of slavery may be made more tolerable? Referred to the next session.

"1789. At this session the propriety of hereditary slavery was taken up, and after some time employed in the consideration of the subject, the following resolution was offered by Eld. John Leland, and adopted.

"Resolved, That Slavery is a violent deprivation of the rights of nature, and inconsistent with republican government, and therefore (we) recommend it to our brethren to make use of every measure to extirpate this horrid evil from the land, and pray Almighty God that our honorable Legislature may have it in their power to proclaim the great jubilee."*

Now who can believe that while the abolition of Slavery "was a favorite topic among statesmen of the South, and the great desire of the Colonies," and when it was pressed and urged by the Baptists of Virginia, and the Presbyterians in their General Assembly—who, I say, can believe that, at that time, Francis Asbury, with his little band of God-fearing, self-denying men, should have set down, and should have deliberately nullified all their former declarations against Slavery?—or that they should have so adjusted the general rule, as to legalize slaveholding by inheritance?—and that too, almost immediately after John Wesley, whom they followed more closely than any other uninspired man, had just published his Tract on Slavery, in which he said, addressing himself to the holders of slaves, whether by inheritance or otherwise, "*You* are the spring that puts all the rest [the kidnappers and the slave traders] in motion. Without *you* they would not stir one step." And then immediately he adds, "at any price, deliver thyself from blood-guiltiness. *Thy* hands, *thy* bed, *thy* furniture, *thy* house, *thy* lands, are at present stained with blood."

Now, who can believe that these holy men, so circumstanced, so impelled by the anti-slavery spirit that surrounded them, could ever have belied all their former avowals, and could have framed a rule that would fasten Slavery in perpetuity upon the Church? Why, the very men of the world at that period would have shamed them for doing so. The framers of the constitution of the general government would not allow the word "slave" to be even named in it. They "thought that it was wrong to admit in the constitution, the idea that there could be property in man." But, according to some, (those modern constitutional expounders at Indianapolis), our fathers very readily admitted both:—and that this admission, viz., the right to hold slaves, was so important, that shortly afterwards they fastened it upon future generations by an organic law, so that nothing but an entire change in the whole frame-work of the body, could release future Methodists from continuing that very thing which a little while before they had called, emphatically, "an abomination, a complicated and execrable crime."

Facts for Baptist Churches, p. 365.

Why, if the founders of our Church had made constitutional provision to continue slavery, by inheritance or under any circumstances whatever, they would have been immensely behind the age in which they lived, and they would have been despised or reprobated for doing so. Had they had no moral principle in regard to slaveholding, it would have been most impolitic for them to have incorporated such a rule for its perpetuity. They would, by it, have insulted the moral sensibility of the whole country, and they would have fixed an indelible stigma upon the very cause which they were laboring to build up. No one, who duly considers the spirit and circumstances of the times in which our Church was founded, can reasonably suppose that the rule on Slavery was inserted for any other purpose than the entire extirpation of Slavery from our communion.

Had the Methodist Episcopal Church made any such provision for the continuance of this great evil, by inheritance or other circumstances, she never would have acquired the reputation which she had for so many years afterwards, by both friends and foes, at the North and at the South, as "the most deadly opponent to Slavery," as "denouncing it as they do now at the North." Nor would the most pro-slavery men of our day have so readily acknowledged, "that the Methodists of that period were practically abolitionists."

The farther consideration of the rule historically, can be better treated in distinct chapters, by showing the grounds on which the rule was suspended, and the various means which the early Methodists used for the extirpation of Slavery.

Now, in regard to constitutional slaveholding in our Church, the sum is this:

1. For its existence there is nothing positive in the discipline; all is by mere implication. All judges in Europe, and our own in this country, until very recently, have decided "that such an unnatural condition of society, can only exist by positive law, and that it must never be received by implication or inference."

2. To say the least of it, the rule is capable of an interpretation which amounts to a prohibition, viz.: it prohibits enslaving without modification or limitation.

3. All the antecedents and historical circumstances of the times when our Church was founded, are against this asserted constitutionality to hold slaves.

4. The whole scope and design of the origination of the rule is equally against it; they were to extirpate it, not to continue it under any circumstances.

5. And until the present generation, the general rule had never been considered a barrier to the entire extirpation of Slavery from our Church. The constitutional objection is an after thought.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPENSION.

PROHIBITORY RULE — ITS EXCEPTIONS — ITS SUSPENSION — MORALLY IT WAS NOT SUSPENDED — ITS ENFORCEMENT WAS ONLY CARRYING OUT THE COMMON LAW OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT — WHAT LED TO THE SUSPENSION — ITS EFFECTS ON THE CHURCH — WHAT THE SLAVE LOST BY IT — IN MANY CASES IT WAS ENFORCED — AT THE SOUTH, THE ADJUSTMENT OF WHAT WAS RIGHT LEFT TO THE ADMINISTRATOR AND THE CONSCIENCE OF THE MASTER.

THE rules and declarations of the Methodist Episcopal Church in those days, were not intended to have been mere sentimentalisms in the discipline. The Methodists were then the most practical people of the age. It was generally said of them, that their religion was "up and be doing." What they conceived to be their duty to God, they usually carried out with great energy and directness.

In 1780, they began their battle with Slavery, and put forth that noble declaration "that Slavery was contrary to the laws of God." Four years afterwards, the year in which our Church was organized, they instituted "an effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us." This method was ordained, not only to remove the last vestige of Slavery from the Church, but also to erect against it such a barrier that it could never again return to it. And after devising a plan for immediate and gradual emancipation, they ordered among other matters the following:

3. "*That every person concerned who would not comply with these rules, shall have liberty quietly to withdraw from our societies within twelve months following the notice being given as aforesaid. Otherwise the assistant shall exclude him in the society.*"

4. "No person so voluntarily withdrawn, or so excluded, shall ever partake of the Lord's Supper among the Methodists, till he complies with the above requisition."

5. "No person holding slaves shall in future be admitted into society, or the Lord's Supper, till he previously complies with these rules concerning Slavery."

Now all must allow that this was "an effectual method." And as Drs. Smith and Winans have acknowledged, it really made the Methodist society or Church, at that time, an anti-slavery or Abolition Church, in the fullest and clearest sense of the word.

This law or rule was ordained the very year in which our Church was founded. Indeed, the Church was erected upon it. For when she was organized this was the existing rule on Slavery, and as yet

it was standing out unimpaired and unsuspended. The suspension as we will show, came afterwards.

But to this there was an exception. Immediately following this "method," there was added a *nota bene*, which was intended for members who lived in those States in which they could not obtain a legal emancipation, or, could only obtain it with great difficulty and after protracted efforts, viz:

"These rules are to effect the members of our society, no farther than they are consistent with the laws of the States in which they reside.

"And respecting our brethren in Virginia that are concerned, and after due consideration of their peculiar circumstances, we allow them two years from the notice given, to consider the expedience of compliance or non-compliance with these rules."

And then follows the 43d question, "What shall be done with those who buy or sell slaves, or give them away?

"Ans. They shall be expelled immediately; unless they buy them on purpose to free them."

Now we should observe that the above rules, for the continuation of membership, required a regular bill of emancipation "*legally executed and recorded.*" In some States, this was impossible; for in them there were no laws concerning emancipation, and no book in which it could be legally recorded. And to such cases no doubt the exception refers, when it releases members who resided in those States whose laws are "inconsistent" with a legal emancipation. In Virginia there were greater impediments than in Maryland, and the more Northern States. Yet the "peculiar circumstances" of the former could not have been insuperable in the estimation of the Conference, for they limited the time to two years, "that the members might consider whether they would, or would not comply with these rules. But this exception, the releasing from the obligation of a legal emancipation, was never intended to release the member from the moral obligation of giving the reputed slave "that which was just and equal" for his work, nor from the duty of treating him in all respects as a fellow-man—for the requisition for these, was already in the Bible on which the discipline was founded, and consequently it was prior in time and higher in authority than any constitutions or ecclesiastical rules could possibly have made them.

The Suspension.—The above effectual method, to use a coarse but not inappropriate figure, was "taking the bull by the horns." And it was no wonder that the untamed creature should have raved and struggled so furiously. All the powers and resources of Slavery were at this time aroused and marshalled against the rule. It was to a great extent a matter of life and death with it. For, at this juncture, statesmen and ministers, congresses, conferences and other ecclesiastical bodies were generally arrayed against it for its entire destruction.

To counteract these influences, the same system of threatening

and terrorism was then resorted to, which has been practised in our own day. "It was going too far," said some. It would do more harm than good. It would hurt the Church, break up society, and above all, it would exclude the gospel from the poor slaves.

And at the Virginia Conference of 1785, several petitions were presented by some of the principal men and members, urging the suspension of the rules on Slavery; but Dr. Coke and the conference brought affairs to this issue:—"That unless the rules against Slavery were permitted to operate, preaching would be withdrawn from those circuits and places in which they were too obnoxious to be suffered." This first refusal, however, did not deter the agitators for Slavery. They resolutely persisted in their efforts; and the Baltimore conference of the same year, in an evil hour, yielded and put forth the following, to wit:

"It is recommended to all our brethren to suspend the execution of the minute on Slavery, till the deliberations of a future conference; and that an equal space of time be allowed all our members for consideration, when the minute shall be put in force.

"N. B. We do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of Slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means."

But still these rules were not suspended at that time absolutely and indefinitely; nor were they suspended because they were deemed unwise and imprudent, as the Rev. Jesse Lee and thousands after him, have asserted. But they were suspended only for a short period, "until the deliberation of a future conference," and that too for a special purpose, "that time may be allowed all our members for consideration, when *the minute shall be put in force.*" For although the conference believed Slavery to be sinful, yet they very reasonably supposed that there were many others who had not this knowledge. Many at that day might have been in the situation of the venerable Garretson, who "had not reflected much upon it and had read nothing about it." Right and wrong are immutable, depending on the will of God who has fixed the relation of things; but guilt or innocence depends on the knowledge of these relations. Hence the conference gave "time for consideration," and required that all "should be warned," when the rule "should be enforced." Another reason is assigned for the suspension of this rule, and one too in keeping with their avowed abhorrence to the practice of slaveholding. In *Dr. Coke's Life*, p. 144, the biographer says of the conference, June 2, 1785, "the rule was taken up, and as the legislature was about to act on the slave question, it was suggested that further interference on their part, might not be proper. Lest their steady perseverence might defeat a greater good, it was finally determined that opposition for the present be suspended." Now here is not the least intimation that the conference who suspended the rule, did so, because they thought it "unwise and imprudent," but as the legislature was to act the next session, they deemed it proper for the present to suspend their action, that there

might not be the least appearance of interference or dictation with the civil authority in their acts.

But who were those agitators who resisted the action of bishops and conferences at the time when that action was *against* Slavery? They were the slaveholders and their apologists, the same class of men who now claim for those in authority almost a divine right to compel members and subordinate ministers wholly to refrain from the slave question. It was not any considerable number of the Methodists who deemed these rules unwise and imprudent. For there never has been anything like a proportion of our poor white brethren at the South who have been favorable to Slavery.

These agitators were of that class of whom Bishop Asbury wrote sixty or more years ago:

"The great landholders who are industrious will soon show the effects of the aristocracy of wealth, *by lording it over their poorer neighbors*, and securing to themselves all the offices of profit and honor." [*Jour. vol* 2, *p.* 36.] Without a figure or exaggeration, the most of the South is governed by an oligarchy.

This class enjoy the most ample means of education, and are in general highly educated, and from their position on the plantations, are trained from their very youth to the science of government. They are to all practical purposes the privileged nobility of the southern country. On the contrary, the great majority of the whites are comparatively poor, and some of them extremely so. Through the influence of Slavery, the means of instruction are not within their reach; consequently a large proportion of them are not educated, and very many of them can neither read nor write. Thus the large slaveholders, who are a small minority, form a real oligarchy, monopolizing the entire direction of all ecclesiastical and civil affairs.

The suspension of the prohibitory rule on Slavery of 1785, will ever form a prominent feature in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For this was the first concession which she had ever made to Slavery. From this period for twenty-five or thirty years she struggled against this enormous evil, sometimes partially enforcing the rule, but perhaps more frequently dispensing with it, until nearly the whole of it at last went by default.

Dr. Olin in the general conference of 1844, said, that the contemplated division broke upon them as a thunder clap out of a clear sky. The Doctor was eloquent, but he was not correct. Such great events never come all at once. This great disruption dates back about sixty years, to the period of which we write. But its sad work is not yet done. Discordant materials can never remain very long together. First pure then peacable, and never till then. After the lapse of nearly two generations, we can see perhaps wherein our fathers might have done better. But probably the most of us, with only their experience in the premises, might not have done so well. They tried to enforce the rule, although it is evident there was a great diversity and remissness in the adminis-

tration of it, particularly in those States which did not allow civil liberty to the emancipated. Some took advantage of these *legal* impediments to emancipation, and did not carry out the real and moral one which the spirit of our rule always required. And the conferences, at last appear to have been at a loss to frame a rule which would meet the case; and consequently they left the adjustment of what was right in the premises, to the administrator and the conscience of the master.

At the Greenville conference, in Virginia, they saw, however, that in very many cases, nothing had been done, and they urged "*That in those States which did not allow emancipation, the master should give wages*" to the reputed slave.* This, indeed, had always been understood, but now they found it necessary to define, so that, if possible, they might detect the craft and sinuosity of selfishness. The proof or showing that it was right to give wages, or an equivalent for work rendered, seemed like attempting to prove the truth of an axiom; for every uninterested person, civilized or savage, felt the conviction of this, at sight. Yet the denial of this axiomatic truth is the main pillar of Slavery; acknowledge this, and the giant sin at once tumbles to its native pit without the hope of a resurrection. Well might Bishop Asbury say, "If the gospel tolerates Slavery, what will it not authorize?"

Although the same system of terrorism was brought to bear upon them, that is menaced in our day, yet there were several other causes which abated the action of our Church, and led to this suspension. Public opinion at this period was deluded with the idea, that as the principles of the Revolution were abroad, and as the foreign slave trade would soon cease, that Slavery itself would soon die out. Some of our wisest and best statesmen were of this opinion, and many of our leading preachers were equally carried away with this delusion. And some of both classes really appeared to think that further action against it was unnecessary if not injurious. And further: mainly through the Methodists the work of emancipation was fairly in progress, and seemed to indicate to many the final extirpation of this great evil.

But there was nothing in all this controversy, which so generally and effectually checked the ministers of our Church in their immediate efforts to extirpate Slavery like the supposed *exclusion of access to the slave.* They had the temporal and spiritual good of the slave at heart. Bishop Asbury frequently observes in his Journal, "That their commission at the extreme South, was rather to the slaves than to the whites." Hence it is not surprising that when they saw themselves in some cases excluded from those who had been begotten in bonds, and who would now be left without their care or instruction, that some of the preachers began to waver and doubt whether it were best to prosecute this enterprise any farther.

Yet, after all, if they had never abated one jot of their opposition, but had continued to press on the conscience of the slaveholder and

* Asbury's Journal.

the civil authorities, the injustice of this prodigious evil, we fully believe God would have sustained them, and honored them in achieving one of the greatest blessings to our church and country. But they have lost that honor. Truth never produces bad results; but error always and invariably must.

This exclusion from the slaves would have been temporary, and after some years it would have been followed by full and untrammelled access to them; so that then they could have preached the whole gospel to them. For Slavery unconnected with the church could not long sustain itself in her presence. It is now nearly forty years since our church began to recede from her first position in regard to Slavery, and what has the poor slave gained by those very concessions which were, in the first instances, made for his sake? He has on the whole gained nothing, but lost much every way. What, in the main, has been his moral and religious condition during the last thirty years? We will let two unexceptionable Southern witnesses tell it.

The Report of the Synod of Georgia and South Carolina in 1834, says: "Who would cred itit, in these years of revival and benevolent effort, that in this Christian republic there are millions of human beings in the condition of heathens, and in some respects in a worse condition? The negroes are destitute of the privileges of the gospel, and ever will be under the present state of things."

The next witness whom we will present is the Rev. James O. Andrews, one of the Bishops of the M. E. Church, South. In an address to the Southern Church, several years ago, he says, "There are thousands and tens of thousands of immortal souls, living in this land of vision, who know little more of God or heaven, than their sable brethren in the interior of Africa, for whose souls no man careth, while with the avails of their sweat and toil, the Southern Church has been contributing her thousands to send the Bible and missionaries to perishing heathen beyond the seas." This is a sad picture after the slaves have been with us for two hundred years.

That there is, however, much real Christianity among the slaves at the South, we know from our own observation, but we know also, that every concession to Slavery has been an impediment, a stumbling-block to their reception of Christianity. None but those who have gained the confidence of the slave and have heard their statements, can tell the amount of infidelity there is among them. They may never have heard of Voltaire or Paine, but yet there are many Deists or Infidels among them notwithstanding. When any such slaves disclose their real opinions they say, "If Christianity allows Slavery they do not believe in it; do not wish to have any thing to do with it." And, if it does not, then they say, "the Ministers and Churches are hypocritical, and they have no confidence in them. That Master and the Parsons are clubbed together to keep them down, to get work out of them for nothing, so that they may both live on their earnings." These are the views and feelings of thousands among them.

But still there are good Christians among slaves. Some of them are practicing the purest morality the world has ever seen, the doing of good for evil, and doing it heartily, as unto the Lord. But we egregiously delude ourselves when we imagine that Christianity among them is dependent on the present race of white preachers. On the contrary, it would continue and spread among them if another white preacher were never again to visit them. The true case is this: Gospel preachers of the abolitionist type of John Wesley, first introduced Christianity among the slaves, and they received such as messengers sent from God. A lodgment of truth was made with them; the plan of salvation by faith was understood by them; and God has since raised up a succession of instrumentalities from among themselves to carry it on. We must not think that the Holy Spirit is given only to ourselves. God does not see as we do. There are men in Slavery who have been called of God to preach as much as John Wesley or St. Paul, and although an impious law will not allow them to read God's word, yet they are taught of God, and they do preach to the edification of their poor fellow slaves. These are they who keep the lamp alive among this, the most oppressed and most abused body of Christians on God's earth. And for nearly a hundred years these patient sufferers have been crying *How long*, O Lord, dost thou not judge us? And what folly and infatuation it is in us to suppose that God will not hear them, or to vainly think that the seeds of avarice and injustice which have been sowed among them for nearly two centuries, will never be reaped. We will close this paragraph in the words of a late writer. "The fatal error of the first Methodists seems to have consisted in an unwarrantable lenity towards the delinquent members, in not promptly enforcing the discipline, under the delusive expectation that they would in a short time be prepared to take the step voluntarily themselves, without being authoritatively coerced."

But we must not concede too much. These rules were not absolutely and indefinitely suspended. They were most probably executed in the States of Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New-York. How often I have heard old Methodists of the South lament the change which had come over the Church since their union with it. To use their own language, "They had made themselves poor by emancipations to retain a standing in that very Church which is now overrun with Slavery."

That these rules were enforced in many cases is evident from the history of this period, and from the unprecedented increase of the free colored population in Maryland, which between 1790 and 1800 went up to 143.5 per cent., the natural increase being less than 25 per cent. Nothing but the large emancipation, occasioned directly or indirectly by the enforcement of this very rule in question, can account for this phenomenon among the colored people in that State.

But throughout this whole investigation we must distinguish between a legal emancipation and a moral and a real one. They are quite different: the one may exist without the other. From the for-

mer the conference might release the member; but they never could "suspend" or release him from the obligation of the latter. For the conference never undertook the dispensing power of the Papacy, to dispense with the moral obligation to do right. Who can suppose that the conference of 1785 attempted to suspend the moral law of God, releasing the early Methodists from their duty, to give to their servants that which was just and right, the very thing which the conference of 1856 actually declined to do?

All the exceptions and suspensions that were at first intended amounted to about this: Releasing the members from procuring the legal and recorded bill of emancipation, and leaving the adjustment of moral right and honesty in the premises to the masters, trusting that they would do voluntarily that which the Church had undertaken to do by ecclesiastical law. But still the Church required those moral duties of them as much after as before the exceptions or the suspensions were allowed. We do not say that this course was wise; we think it was not, for it was yielding the rights of the Church to a worldly policy; and it was not sufficiently appreciating the Christian rights of poor brethren in bonds, as bound with them; and further, it was allowing a man to be a judge in his own cause. But it is really sickening and lamentable to see editors and members of the general conference producing the above exception and suspension, as if by them, the conference of 1785 had conceded the whole ground, allowing an iniquitous secular law to override their own, and to make, through it, the word of God of no effect. The conference of 1785 intended no such thing. The truth is, the conference too generously committed the adjustment of moral right to the integrity of the masters, expecting that in this way they would extirpate Slavery. But in most cases they betrayed the trust, as they do now, and perhaps ever will, "for a gift blindeth the eyes," and no man should be a judge in his own cause.

But although the Church could not change the relation in civil law, yet she aimed to change it, in reality, in moral law. With very many there is a great error in this particular, and the whole subject has been strangely mystified. It ought to be remembered that the State never makes domestic, that is, *house slavery*; it only gives individuals the privilege to do so if they see proper; and when they do it the State protects and sustains them in it. But it does not compel them. In Turkey the law allows a man to have four wives, but that would not compel a Christian in that country to have so many. A Mohammedan having four wives, on embracing Christianity, could not dissolve his relation to them in law; he would still be obliged to support them and their children. But that would not compel him to live with all of them in the relation of husband.

So the civil authority may say that a Christian shall not dissolve the relation of master and slave in *civil* law; but there is not a Methodist from Maryland to Mexico who cannot dissolve it, in fact and in reality, if he will. He can say that there shall not be a *domestic* slave on his plantation or in his domicil.

CHAPTER VIII.

COLLATERAL EVIDENCE OF NON-CONSTITUTIONAL SLAVEHOLDING.

EFFORTS TO EXTIRPATE — NEVER ACQUIESCED IN SLAVEHOLDING — PREACHED AGAINST IT — OPPOSITION — DR. COKE — REV. J. EVERETT — REV. G. DOUGHERTY — MOBBED IN CHARLESTON — FELL A MARTYR — BISHOP ASBURY'S TESTIMONY — EMANCIPATIONS — METHODISTS FLED TO OHIO — SAYLE — AXLEY — REV. FREEBORN GARRETSON — HIS PLAN OF EMANCIPATION.

THE period in which our Church was founded was not a compromising period; and our fathers were no compromisers. Moral principle with them was an entity, fixed in its character as the attributes of its Great Author; and the gospel, under their administration, was never intended to have that pliancy which could accommodate itself to any existing evils of a moral nature.

As soon as Slavery was discovered in the Methodist societies, immediate measures, in 1780, were taken to drive it out. These efforts were continued with more or less success during the whole life of our founders. At first they were merely monitory; and when they did not accomplish their intended object, they became disciplinary. The execution of which they delayed or hastened, according to the light or the knowledge of the members in regard to the nature of Slavery. Where it was attainable, they required a bill of emancipation "*legally* executed and recorded." In States in which this was "inconsistent," they required a moral and a real one, giving wages for service rendered, or leaving the adjustment of what was right to the administrator and the conscience of the master. Sometimes, as we have shown, suspending the rule for a season, and then again enforcing it, but never during their life, losing sight of the character of Slavery, that it was contrary to the laws of God and man.

And in these measures there seems to have been, generally, great unanimity. Perhaps none, except the Rev. Jesse Lee, our southern historian, thought they were going too far. For Bishop Asbury records frequently in his journal, "our conference closed in peace," and "*we were all agreed* on African Slavery." In the early period of the Church, her councils were not disturbed by the agitation of the slave question, for she herself was the chief mover in the matter. The opposition was mainly from without, and the Church was only disturbed because a few had brought this crying sin within her border.

After the commencement of the present century, the efforts of the Methodist Episcopal Church to extirpate Slavery, were far less vigorous than they had been before. But she never acquiesced in the continuation of Slavery. So far from it, she held the practice of it in the deepest abhorrence, and was continually enquiring for the best means to effect its destruction.

This, perhaps, will be the best place to examine one of the most specious arguments during the last general conference, to prove the constitutionality of slaveholding. The Rev. Mr. Slicer, of the Baltimore conference, said, "It is a wise maxim in civil law, that the law is to be interpreted by the framers of the law, and by the practice under the law immediately succeeding its enactment. This is a fair principle of construction, or method of interpretation, and to show that this principle has been recognized by the highest judicial authority of this country, I beg leave to call the attention of this conference to *Cranch's Report*, p. 97. In the case of Steward *vs.* Leaird, Mr. Chief Justice Marshall had tried the cause in the Court below; the judgment was affirmed, and Mr. Justice Patterson, in delivering the opinion of the Supreme Court, said:— "'To this objection, which is of recent date, it is sufficient to observe, that practice and acquiescence under it (the law) for a period of several years, commencing with the organization of the judicial system, affords an irresistable answer, and have indeed fixed its construction.'"

The above maxim is a good one, and the legal inference from it is equally good; but unfortunately for their cause, it was drawn from an entire falsehood. The assumption that the "practice and acquiescence of the Church in Slavery commenced with the organization of the system," is wholly without foundation. The practice, on the contrary, has always been under protest, and as to the acquiescence in Slavery on the principle of ecclesiastical right, there never was a vestige of it during the average lives of her founders. It is one of the most unfounded assumptions in this whole controversy. So this argument so far from proving constitutional slaveholding in the Methodist Episcopal Church, will prove just the reverse, as we can show; and thus the enemy's guns can be easily turned upon themselves.

For more than twenty years, while the administration was in the hands of those venerable men who framed the rule, there was one incessant war against slaveholding in the Church. They were struggling to "extirpate" it, calling for light, seeking its destruction, "waiting when the minute [against it] shall be enforced," and finally they left the stereotyped question, which the Church for seventy-two years has been continually asking, "What shall be done to extirpate Slavery?"

So that when the facts in the case are seen, the entire fabric raised upon this fancied foundation, falls at once to the ground, leaving only behind it an evidence of the weakness of the cause, which was driven to such expedients. To illustrate: one has a fine field; unruly

cattle get into it; the proprietor tries to get them out; they evade his efforts; he still tries, calls for help, and finally he stands continually calling, "What shall be done to drive them out?"

Surely this would seem to have been a strange way of acquiescing. But as this is presented and dwelt upon as about the best plea for constitutional slaveholding in the Church, we will amplify and give a condensed view of the efforts of those who founded this constitutional rule. The state of the case was simply this: our fathers knew that Slavery was wholly and essentially wrong, but they know that all had not this knowledge. They put forth their views and laid down their rules for the rising Church, and then they waited that all might abandon it voluntarily, as many had already done. And further, that those who had been "warned might either give up their slaves or quietly leave the Church." Their delay in executing the rule did not arise from any change in their views or feeling in regard to Slavery, or from any less determination to extirpate it from the Church, but simply as the Minutes of 1785 say, "That time be allowed all our members for consideration, when the minute shall be put in force."

So far from acquiescing in Slavery to domesticate it in the Church, her first efforts, on the contrary, were to extirpate it from the Church. And soon these efforts were not only defensive, but agressive. By private admonition, public preaching, and the circulation and presentation of petitions, she was laboring to drive Slavery not from the Church only, but from the nation. The moral sentiment which had been already put forth by our Church in the hands of our fathers, was not an abstraction, or a dead letter on the statute book, but a living operating principle, known and felt in the community. This crying evil was allowed no special privileges or prerogatives; but on the contrary, it was placed by them in the same category with other sins. It was never called in those days a "delicate question" or a "peculiar institution," but on the contrary, an "abomination," a "complicated crime," and similar names, all of them significant of their estimation of its sinful nature.

According to the history of those times, some of our ministers for preaching against Slavery were abused, mobbed, arrested and fined. But they still persisted; God blessed them in it; the people and the Church stood by them, and emancipations were effected almost wherever they went.

In Virginia, while preaching in a barn, Dr. Coke introduced the subject of Slavery, and expatiated on its injustice in no measured terms. Many were provoked to hear those truths which from their earliest infancy they had been taught to stifle, and which their interest still instructed them to conceal. A small party, therefore, withdrew from the house, and formed a combination to offer him some personal violence as soon as he came out. To persevere in this resolution, they were stimulated by a lady, whose fashionable appearance was more conspicuous than her politeness or humanity. This lady informed the enraged mob that she would give them fifty

pounds in case they would seize the preacher and give him one hundred lashes.

On leaving the house, Dr. Coke was instantly surrounded by a ferocious party, who began with threats, and proceeded to put these threats in execution. A magistrate, however, who was present, opposed the violence which they menanced, by seizing one who appeared anxious to be foremost. Another who seemed to have more strength, as he evidently had more zeal and courage than religion, was preparing to repel the assailants by giving them battle. This gentleman was a military officer, and sustained the rank of a colonel. Their united influence had a most powerful effect. The most courageous began to be abashed, and marks of timidity were seen in all. They, therefore, gave vent to their rage in idle threats, and suffered the object of their vengeance to escape without further molestation. But rage and hostility were not the only effects produced by this discourse. The magistrate who had espoused the cause of Dr. Coke began to view the subject in a more serious light; and, to show that he acted from pure principle, immediately emancipated *fifteen slaves.* The report of his conduct extended the benefit still farther, and induced another to follow his laudable example, and to emancipate eight slaves. And the united example of both induced another to emancipate one. These effects were instantaneously visible; but to what extent this faithful but sharp reproof operated in secret, we must not expect fully to know till we enter into the world of spirits.—*Dr. Coke's Life*, p. 138.

In these noble efforts Dr. Coke took a prominent part; but he was not alone in them. His labors were in common with the honored names of Asbury, Garrettson, Everett, Dougherty, and many others, whose memories will yet be revered in the Methodist Episcopal Church when she shall be delivered from Slavery, and when her future historian will write her whole history, unawed by the slave power. Many anecdotes expressive of their abhorrence of Slavery, are yet in the remembrance of the older members of our Church at the South, but most of them are now lost, perhaps forever. These men were foremost among the real heroes of our Methodism. Could their deeds and sayings, in this warfare against Slavery, be recovered and published, they would correct many popular errors, and they would greatly enrich our literature. But our Church in those days had no papers or periodicals to preserve these precious items of history; and on account of the pro-slavery current which has been settling back upon us for the last forty years, very few of them have been transmitted even orally to posterity. These worthies have long since gone to their reward, and in regard to most of them,

> "Their ashes lie
> No marble tells us where: with their names
> No bard embalms, nor sanctifies his song."

Joseph Everett was admitted into the ministry in 1781. We know little of him, other than that he was one of Nature's great men. He received but little improvement from letters; but he was

faithful and fearless in every thing pertaining to God and truth. The following anecdotes of him are set forth on the authority of a cotemporary who still lives.

On a circuit in Maryland, a lady who had recently been converted, and whose husband was a large slaveholder, invited him after sermon to her home to get refreshment, or to pass the night. He availed himself of the kind invitation, and was received by the family in the most courteous and cordial manner. On looking around and seeing something to awaken suspicion, he said, "Sister, do you keep slaves here?" The frightened lady, in a subdued tone, replied, "We have a few servants." To which he answered, "*I'll not eat bread nor drink water in your house.*" And no apology, no plea of circumstance nor inheritance, could avail any thing with him; but suiting the action to the word, he immediately left the house, lest he should in some way acquiesce in the practice of Slavery. I have been told by Southern Methodists, that when the early preachers were obliged to lodge on slaveholding plantations, that in many instances, they would not allow a slave to take care of their horses, but they would do it themselves, lest it might have the appearance of acquiescing in Slavery. How matters with many are now changed!

Mr. Everett, as presiding elder on a large district, held many love-feasts. In one of them, a member was present, against whom there was something arising out of Slavery. During the meeting, he arose to speak, and not having much liberty, he began to cough, to clear the way for freer utterance. "Ah!" cried out the presiding elder, "*Cough that slave out of your throat*, and then you will be able to speak the better." Now this was not very smooth, nor very polite; but it told on the delinquent, and it told in the community around him, and by it, this fearless minister of truth has transmitted his testimony against Slavery, down even to our times. His opposition to Slavery, and those of his compeers at that period, unlike the sentimental anti-slaveryism of too many brethren and editors of our day, had pith and point in it. It was significant, and it showed at once his views of the matter, and that he intended to do something for the extirpation of Slavery.

The Rev. George Dougherty, a South Carolinian, was another of Nature's noble-men. Like the apostle to the Gentiles, his bodily appearance was not imposing. But God had given him a mind of superior mould, and what was far better, a heart to feel another's woe, and a fidelity and a firmness which nothing earthly could corrupt or bend. But in middle life he fell a martyr to the liberty of the pulpit, and to a pure Methodism. He was an intense enemy to Slavery, and finally lost his life on account of the poor down trodden slave, and was buried with them in the African Church Yard, in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Many incidents in his life have been narrated. But we will present at this time, the account of his last days, from the pen of Bishop Andrews, of the Church South, published [1830] in the *Quarterly Re-*

view. We choose this source for the two-fold purpose of illustrating our main argument, and also of showing the great change of sentiment and feeling which had come over our Church between the time of the martyr and that of the narrator.

"In the years 1801–2," says the Bishop, "George Dougherty and John Harper were stationed in Charleston. During their ministry, it appears that Mr. Harper had received from some ecclesiastical body* at the North a number of pamphlets, containing certain resolutions recommending measures to memorialize the Southern legislative bodies, in behalf of the abolition of Slavery. Mr. H. had merely showed them to a friend; it being agreed between them, that it was not prudent to make any distribution of them. But rumor, with her many tongues, was busy in publishing abroad the terrible treason which was to be found in possession of the Methodist preachers. The intendant of the city called on Mr. Harper for an explanation. This was satisfactorily given, and to close the concern, the offensive documents were burned in the presence of his honor, who went away apparently well satisfied with the proof he had received of the prudent conduct of the clergyman.

"But the mob were determined that the Methodist parson should, in his own person, atone for harboring the above-mentioned wicked resolutions. They accordingly seized Mr. Harper as he left the Church. A quarrel arising among them, he escaped to his home in safety. The mob raged at the disappointment. They resolved, however, to return to the charge the next evening. But it so happened, that Mr. Dougherty was the officiating minister on that evening. This disappointment, however, was a small matter. It was a Methodist minister, and they would not, of course, be very nice as to the name. Mr. Dougherty was seized as he left the Church, and dragged by the mob to a considerable distance, through the streets. Some cried, "pump him," and others said, "duck him." It was finally concluded to *pump* him. They accordingly dragged him to a pump, placed his head under the spout, and continued pumping water on him for some time. How much longer they might have continued, is uncertain, had not the intrepidity of a female checked their proceedings. This was Mrs. Kugeley, a pious member of the Church, who rushed into the midst of the infuriated mob, and stuffed her shawl into the spout of the pump. This resolute act quite astounded Mr. D.'s persecutors. At this moment, a gentleman stepped up with a drawn sword, and taking Mr. Dougherty by the hand, avowed his purpose to protect him at all hazards. So saying, he led him away, no man troubling him any farther. Mr. D. was by this time thoroughly wet, and it is not unlikely that this disgraceful proceeding contributed in no small measure to lay the foundation of that pulmonary affection, which ultimately carried to the grave this

*Now, this "some ecclesiastical body" was no less than the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For Bishop Asbury's Journal, Vol. iii, p. 4, in speaking of the very same mobbing, calls these pamphlets "our Address" and the "Address of the General Conference."

almost unequalled man of God, and minister of the Lord Jesus Christ." He lingered a few years after the injuries received on this occasion, and died a martyr to the freedom of the pulpit, and to the purity of the gospel.

The above is the account of the Southern Bishop. But it does not tell the whole truth. The suppressions and omissions in this and in other instances, are not only evidences of a far higher anti-slavery character in our Church when it was founded, but also of an unwillingness on the part of most writers of the present day that her former intense hostility to Slavery should be fully known. But truth, however, will come out; and a few quotations from Bishop Asbury's Journal will give us the whole truth in this matter, and it will show that with them there was no succumbing to the slave power. "I had thought," says the Bishop, "our Address would have moved their majesties, the peers of Charleston. Report says they have pumped poor Dougherty until they had almost deprived him of breath, and John Harper committed the Addresses to the flames before the Intendant of the city. I saw one of the members of the General Assembly of South Carolina, who informed me that our Addresses from the general conference had been read and reprobated; and furthermore, it had been the occasion of producing a law which prohibited a minister's attempting to instruct any number of blacks with the doors shut; authorizing a peace officer to break open the doors in such cases, and disperse or whip the offenders. A Solomon Reeves let me know that he had seen the Address, signed by me; and was quite confident that there were no arguments to prove that Slavery was contrary to the spirit of the gospel. What absurdities will not men defend? *If the gospel will tolerate Slavery, what will it not authorize?* I am strangely mistaken if this said Mr. Reeves has more grace than is necessary, or more of Solomon than the name."*

What a glorious land of liberty that, in which Christians peaceably worshipping God, were liable to have their doors broken open, and to be whipped and driven away! So it seems there were pro-slavery advocates formerly, as there are in our day; but Bishop Asbury judged, if the gospel would tolerate Slavery, it would tolerate any abomination whatever. This does not look as if he had a few years before made ample provision in the general rules to domicile Slavery in the Church, either by inheritance, or under any circumstances, for he makes no exceptions. We are sorry that Mr. Harper could have been weak enough to dishonor the paper and doings of his own conference, and thus bow to the unrighteous demands of Slavery. This concession, however, gained nothing for him, for the intendant who had been ostensibly so solicitous for the peace of the city, suffered a ruthless mob unrestrained, so far as we can learn, to abuse him and his more intrepid colleague. Or, more probably, he instigated the mob to do it, for mobs against liberty and free labor scarcely ever originate with the poor, or with the mass.

* Jour. Vol. iii, pp. 4, 8, 13.

We think further, that Bishop Asbury and a general conference of gospel ministers were as capable of judging what was proper in the premises, as a small oligarchy of slaveholders, and that the burning and public reprobation of their address, was not only an insult to a large body of respectable citizens, but a daring outrage on the rights of gospel ministers. But what rights, sacred or secular, has Slavery ever regarded in its furious course of assumption and oppression? A system that can flog women and sell children, can do almost any thing.

This, and a few other quotations from Mr. Asbury's Journal, will show what were his ideas of our general rule on Slavery:—that he never thought or intended to tolerate it in the Church, under any circumstances. For in the above, he classes Slavery among the greatest sins, the *ne plus ultra* of sins, and that if the gospel, and consequently, the general rule would tolerate it, it would authorize any thing.

And further, in going to Charleston, he says, "Here are the rich, the rice, and the slaves; the last are awful to me. Wealthy people settle on the rice lands of Cooper River, and hold from 50 to 200 on a plantation, in chains of bondage."* In looking over the slaveholding country, he says in another place, "What blanks are in this country, and how much worse are the rich plantations! If a man-of-war is *a floating hell, these are standing ones.* Wicked masters, overseers and negroes—cursing, drinking, no Sabbath, no sermons."†

In the following quotation, he alludes to cruelties which the public sentiment allowed in his day, and which it still allows: "My spirit has been grieved with some Methodists who hire out their slaves at public places, to the highest bidder, *to cut, skin, and starve them.* I think such members ought to be dealt with. On the side of the oppressor there are law and power; but where are justice and mercy to the slave? What eye will pity, what hand will help, or even listen to their distresses? I will try if words can be as drawn swords to pierce the hearts of their owners."‡

These were probably the Methodists with whom they were "waiting," or those who lived in States that did allow civil emancipation, and to whom the church had given the moral adjustment of what was right for the legal slave. And if the latter, it shows how absolute power and selfishness would allow the unprotected to be *skinned and starved*, that great profits may come to the master. God never intended that any one should be a judge in his own cause. And as to the adjustment of what is right, God has fixed that, and the Church has no right to transfer it to another.

More than fifty years ago Bishop Asbury deprecated the divine vengeance which would visit the Southern country on account of Slavery. "I saw how the flood had ploughed up the streets of Augusta (in Georgia.) I walked over the ruins for nearly two miles, viewing the deep gulf in the main street. I suppose they would

* Jour. Vol. ii, p. 241. † Ibid. Vol. ii, p. 185. ‡ Ibid. Vol. ii, p. 273.

crucify me if I were to tell them that this is the *African flood;* but if they could hear me think, they would discover this to be my sentiment."*

Other passages might be adduced, but these may suffice. And the above certainly gives a different phase to Slavery from that which many modern ministers have given. And Bishop Asbury had an opportunity to know; for his knowledge was not obtained, like that of most modern travellers and chief ministers, on the stage route, from the interested masters, or in their gay and splendid parlors; but it was formed in the cabins, on the fields, and in the rice swamps of the slaves themselves. And Slavery is now what it was then; for it can never be essentially ameliorated. For it is a relation kept together by force and fear, and nothing else. Mutual interest, faith, truth, honesty, duty and affection, are elements which do not belong to it. Every element of which it is composed is at war with all that God has loved or established. Many good people do not concern themselves much about it, because they do not know its true character, and will not believe, although such a one as Bishop Asbury compares many plantations to "standing hells," and Methodist plantations are not beyond the average, according to my observation of other plantations.

In the preceding I have mostly dwelt upon the testimonies of the early Methodists. I shall show now what they did. Their testimony was not a mere abstraction in the discipline. It was a living, working principle: their faith had works.

In the case of Dr. Coke and others, we have shown that the first Methodists preached publicly against not only Slavery, but against slaveholding. And these vigorous efforts were not in vain. There was a general inquiry awakened concerning the religious and political bearing of Slavery, and many were convinced of its unrighteousness and emancipated their slaves. Under one sermon, as we have seen, twenty-three slaves were known to have been set free; and how many others, as the result of other faithful warnings, eternity alone can tell. Bishop Asbury records in Annamessex, Maryland, in 1788, "that most of our members in these parts have freed their slaves." There are a few yet remaining at the South who well remember the sacrifices which they or their fathers had made to the demands of justice, and to gain a standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Emancipations must have been considerable, and mostly through the means of our Church, for just at that time we do not learn that there was any considerable effort from any other quarter. For according to the census of 1790, there were in Maryland alone 8,043 free persons of color, and in 1800 this number had increased to 19,538. And many others of Maryland and Virginia, who had liberated their slaves, had removed with them to Ohio.

Among the early Methodists there was a holy chivalry in doing good. Towards the close of the last century there were few, between New England and the Carolinas, who had not heard, or who had

* Jour. Vol. ii, p. 246.

not sung, the ballad "The Banks of the Lovely Ohio." Kentucky was much richer in soil, and to the Virginian it was much nearer. But Ohio was the land of Liberty; on her soil Freedom could grow and thrive without stint—without the blightings and the curses of Slavery. And thither, from the slave States, many Methodists and Methodist preachers went, together with all their freed men.

It is related, I think of John Sayle, long a worthy member in Virginia, and among the first emigrants to the West, that as soon as he and his former slaves had reached the opposite bank of "the lovely Ohio," that, leaping from the craft that had ferried them over, they embraced the very ground in their arms; and that then, all of them on their knees, thanked God aloud for bringing them from a land of oppression into a land of liberty. And that after inhaling its free air, and making the shores reverberant with their hallelulas, the former master and slaves shook hands together, saluting each other now in the relation of man to man, untrammeled by Slavery and the disabilities which iniquitous laws had placed upon them. And now this exultant company having reached a free soil, enjoying both the freedom of speech and the blessing of a pure and a full gospel, went forth into the wilderness, beginning, as it were, the world anew.

Most Methodists, and nearly every preacher of this period, abhorred the practice of Slavery. James Axley, a backwoods preacher, but always good and true to a pure Christianity, had his "trinity of devils" to fight in almost every sermon which he preached. These were Dress, Rum, and Slavery. And Slavery was not the least in the triad. He hated it intensely, and he loved to hate it, and to drive into it on all occasions with his characteristic force and bluntness.

It is an old adage, that wherever there is a will there is a way. And when our entire Church, ministers and members, shall be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of freedom, and shall be deeply impressed with a keen sense of the moral obliquity of slaveholding, then there will be many ways by which they can rid themselves and the Church of this enormous evil. We fear that it is really this willingness, in most cases, which is chiefly wanting. We may wish the abolition of Slavery as the sinner wishes for Heaven, but are we both willing to make the requisite sacrifices to obtain them?

We are happy to find an example in early Methodism, in the Life of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson, to illustrate the possibility and practicability of emancipation, even in those States which do not allow civil freedom to the emancipated. And although Maryland, the State in which this took place, might have permitted civil emancipation, yet Mr. G. effected it without any reference to State regulations, and could have done the same in South Carolina or any other State. Now what has been done can be done again, and ought to be done by every Methodist in the United States. The Rev. Freeborn Garrettson having lost his first manifestation, and being in great distress, writes:

"I continued reading the Bible till eight, and then, under a sense

of duty, called the family together for prayer. As I stood with a book in my hand in the act of giving out a hymn, this thought powerfully struck my mind: "*It is not right to keep your fellow creatures in bondage; you must let the oppressed go free.*" I knew this to be the same blessed voice which had spoken to me before; till then I had never suspected that the practice of slave keeping was wrong; I had not read a book on the subject, nor had been told so by any. I paused a minute, and then replied: 'Lord, the oppressed shall go free.' And I was as *clear of them* in my mind as if I never owned one. I told them they did not belong to me; that I did not desire their services without making them a compensation. I was now at liberty to proceed in worship. After singing I kneeled to pray. Had I the tongue of an angel I could not fully describe what I felt; all my dejection and that melancholy gloom which oppressed me vanished in a moment, and a divine sweetness ran through my whole frame. It was God, not man, that taught me the impropriety of holding slaves, and I shall never be able to praise Him enough for it. My very heart has bled since that for slaveholders, especially those who make a profession of religion. For I believe it to be a *crying sin.*"

In the above plain, unvarnished, yet highly beautiful narrative, we have an exhibition of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon an awakened and an obedient mind; and also an exemplification of the doctrines, measures, and practice of Abolitionism.

His creed. "It is not right to hold in bondage." This is the pith, point and main spring of all real Anti-Slaveryism. God taught it to him. The relation between master and slave was not the relation between man and man, but that between man and brute. It had no warrant in God's word. One human being could not own another, for this would be the entire absorption of one man into another, annihilating at once his individuality in creation and his accountability to God. It would be deranging the whole order of heaven; defacing the crowning distinction between persons and things; despoiling man of the dominion which God gave him, and impiously attempting to pluck down an heir of immortality to the level of merchandize.

His measures. He avowed his creed; he bore his testimony. Knowing that public opinion in this country is the basis on which iniquitous laws and usages were founded, was only the aggregate of individual opinion, he immediately withdrew his support from it. He did not inquire how it would be received; whether the rulers would approve of it; or what would be the consequences. It was sufficient for him to know that it was wrong, and that it was his duty to do right. Duty is ours; consequences belong to God. He will take care of his own work. A good deed can never really have bad consequences, no more than a good tree can have bad fruit.

His practice. He let the oppressed go free; he dissolved immediately and for ever the relation of master and slave. He let go his hold on his fellow men; he refused any longer to take the advantage,

which the unrighteous law of the State gave him, of taking his neighbor's work without wages. He said nothing about "legal relations;" perhaps he thought nothing about them. If he did he could defend and protect all his former slaves who chose to remain with him. He yielded at once to the impulsive dictations of the Holy Spirit; he let the oppressed go free, and God blessed and sustained him.

Now all that this man of God did in his case, every Methodist and every Christian ought to do everywhere; for the Word of God and the spirit and letter of our discipline requires it from them; it requires the abandonment of all "enslaving." Nothing is said of "certain circumstances." This is a fiction of later times, unknown in those better days. A state of guardianship, our Church supposes, in those States in which the slave cannot obtain legal emancipation; but the real relation of master and slave she never originally intended.

CHAPTER IX.

POLITICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL ACTION AGAINST SLAVERY.

PETITIONS TO THE STATE LEGISLATURES — GEN. WASHINGTON — ADDRESS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1796 CIRCULATED — WESLEY'S THOUGHTS ON SLAVERY — UNITED EFFORT — DURING WHICH THE CHURCH PROSPERS — ADVERSE INFLUENCES — COTTON GIN — PURCHASE OF LOUISIANA.

THE first efforts of our fathers for the extirpation of Slavery were wholly of a religious or ecclesiastical character. They attempted to bring the master and slave under the same church discipline, and as in all other cases to apply the same law and the same administration to both classes. But in carrying out the laws of Christianity they were continually coming in collision with the usages of Slavery, and the iniquitous laws of the State. The requirements of the one were encroaching on the other. In consequence of this, and, as they were aiming to reform the continent, they began to avail themselves of their constitutional privilege of petition, to remove Slavery, that they might establish a consistent church discipline, and a pure unmutilated Christianity.

For at this time they do not appear to have thought of engrafting the Christian religion on a slaveholding community. For this purpose the conference of 1785 petitioned the legislature of North Carolina, that masters who wished it might have liberty to admit their slaves to civil and legal emancipation. Another, of more extensive requirements, was presented to the General Assembly of Virginia. These petitions were signed by the conference, and a copy of them was placed in the hands of each preacher, to circulate on his circuit and to obtain signatures to them among the people. Many eminent men were not only favorable to this measure, but were quite sanguine of its success.—*Dr. Coke's Life.*

What was contained in these petitions cannot now be satisfactorily known. Whether they were accidentally lost, or by some one suppressed, we cannot tell. The general conference this year must certainly have kept a journal, and it is remarkable that they are not to be found among their papers or those of Bishop Asbury. The Bishop frequently alludes to this address in his journals. The document itself, and the notoriety which it gained at that day, the opposition with which it met, and the legal enactments of which it is said to have been the cause, are all by far too important features in the early history of our church to be passed over in silence, and we cannot but regret their disappearance.

But that the lost petitions contained good anti slavery doctrines, is quite certain from the fact that "their majesties" burned them, as Mr. Asbury called the "peers of Charleston." But although South Carolina treated them contemptuously, the other southern legislatures entertained them with respect.

During this year Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury waited on Gen. Washington, who received them politely, and gave them his opinion against Slavery. That he was not only favorable to emancipation in general, but to the object of their petition, both ecclesiastically and politically, may be inferred from a letter which he sent about this time to a distinguished individual, in which he says—"There is no person living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see some plan for the abolition of Slavery." And in another letter written about the same time he said—"There is only one proper and effectual mode by which the abolition of Slavery can be accomplished, and that is by legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage can go, shall not be wanting."

These were the sentiments and the pledges of the father of our country, and they were generally those of the great body of the American people of that day.

In 1795, it was recommended by the traveling ministry of the M. E. Church, that the first Friday in March, 1796, should be held as a most solemn day of fasting, and that in common with other sins, the Church should "lament the deep-rooted vassalage that still reigneth in many parts of these United States, and should pray that Africans and Indians may help to fill the pure Church of God."—*Min.* 1795. And shortly after, such was the success of the efforts of our Church in reference to the emancipation of slaves and their conversion to God, that the conference, in their thanksgiving address of the next year, thanked God "for African liberty," and goes on to say, "we feel gratitude that so many thousands of these poor people are *free* and pious."—*Bound Min. p.* 164.

Addresses of the General Conferences.—About the year 1796, the general conference put forth an address to the Church on the subject of Slavery, of which the following is an extract.

"What regulation shall be made for the extirpation of the crying evil of African Slavery?

Ans. 1.—We declare that we are more than ever convinced of the great evil of African Slavery which still exists in these United States. The preachers and other members of society are requested to consider the subject of negro Slavery with deep attention, and that they impart to the general conference, through the medium of the yearly conferences, or otherwise, any important truths on the subject, that the conference may have full light; in order to take further steps towards the eradicating this enormous evil from that part of the Church of God to which they are connected."

And again in 1800, they required the entire Church to memorialize the respective legislatures, for the emancipation of Slavery.

"The annual conferences are directed to draw up addresses for the gradual emancipation of the slaves, to the legislatures of those states in which no general laws have been passed for that purpose. These addresses shall urge in the most respectful but pointed manner the necessity of a law for the gradual emancipation of the slaves; proper committees shall be appointed by the annual conferences out of the most respectable of our friends for the conducting of this business; and the presiding elders, elders, deacons, and traveling preachers shall procure as many proper signatures as possible to these addresses, and give all the assistance in their power in every respect, to aid the committees and to further this blessed undertaking. Let this be continued from year to year, till the desired end be accomplished."—*Discipline*, 1801.

These addresses, as all must see, instituted a perfect system of agitation. But the agitation did not affect the peace of the Church injuriously. Perhaps it rather promoted it by giving vent ecclesiastically to the general feeling of abhorrence to "this crying sin." So far from requiring the Church "wholly to refrain," to be still, or to have a "breathing spell," the conference of 1801 said "let this be continued from year to year, till the desired end be accomplished."

The object of this address was not "to regulate the practice of Slavery in the M. E. Church," as a reputed history of our Church intimates; but on the contrary, to extirpate it from her, to root it out as an execrable weed which the enemy had sown within her sacred enclosure. They had labored with various success for twenty years, almost single-handed, against this giant iniquity; much light had been diffused, and very many slaves had been emancipated, the descendants of whom have since arisen to wealth and respectability, particularly in Baltimore and Philadelphia. But still Slavery existed, and like the foul spirit was seeking rest even in the Church of God. Yet the conference was not discouraged; so far from yielding to it, having learned more of its character, it declared they were *more* than ever convinced of its evil nature, and resolved once more to make a vigorous effort to eradicate this enormous evil from the Church. For this purpose they called upon the preachers, and other members of the church, to agitate the question, that they might have full light to act wisely and efficiently in the premises.

Whether this conference, or that of a recent date, which required all "wholly to refrain," acted more in agreement with the spirit and letter of the constitution of our Church, we must leave our readers to judge. One thing is certain: both acts could not have been constitutional. And as the only tribunal in our Church, to test the constitutionality of all the acts of the general conference, is what Bishop Emory very properly called the "*pious, enlightened judgment of our extended communion*," every one must judge for himself. And consequently, ministers and members ought to study our early history, examine the principles on which our Church was founded, so as to be able to resist every unconstitutional measure, and to keep the Church on the true basis on which she was founded.

And, in addition to the circulation of anti-slavery petitions and addresses, there was the distribution of "That Fire Brand," as some have called Mr. Wesley's "Thoughts on Slavery"*—a tract that did not treat its subject very gingerly. It was written before the horrid character of Slavery had been disguised, or softened down to "Delicate Question," the "Peculiar Institution." It was also written by one who called things by their right names, and placed Slavery fully and squarely in the category with other sins, or rather, by way of eminence, he called it "the complicated, the execrable villainy."

Here, then, the whole Church was organized into a society for anti-slavery agitation. Certainly, all this did not look like "acquiescing" that Slavery might remain in the Church, or that they must alter the whole frame-work of our constitution to get it out. There was not one word about altering the general rules to get Slavery out of the Church that day. Her annual conferences were inviting free discussion, and seeking for more light; her preachers and other officers were circulating the most thorough anti-slavery tract that was ever published; they were obtaining signatures and petitioning the legislative bodies, and using every means in their power to have Slavery abolished. They had at that time no "breathing spell" at all, for they knew and felt that this enormous evil was ever active in corrupting the Church, and in hindering the work of God among them.

Nor did the early Methodists lose anything in public estimation by these measures; nor were they, except in a few cases, shut out from access to the slaves. But on the contrary, the moral power which they gained by these measures was immense with almost every class. Even the slaveholders respected them; the masses of the people sympathised with them; and in reference to the slaves, "if it were possible, they would have plucked out their eyes to give unto them."

It is one of the veriest devices of the Devil, to suppose that ministers of the gospel must abate somewhat the integrity of truth, to conciliate the master, that they may find access to the slave. These pleas of necessity, and of certain circumstances, which seem to allow the gospel a pliancy to existing evils, are easily seen through, and when they are, they divest that very gospel, in the estimation of those to whom it comes in this way, of nearly all its sacredness. The preacher thus coming is shorn of his strength; stript of his moral power; and appears, in many respects, less than a secular man. I have heard even slaveholders speak contemptuously of such ministers. And when ministers of this kind, who have been thus caressed, and fed, and feed by the master, when they come to the poor slaves, how often do the latter say in their hearts, and many of them out openly, "mighty unsart'n what 'em arter."

After this last address of the General Conference, which had met with some opposition, several of the preachers began to falter in this

* So late as 1803, the Hymn Books of our Church, published by Ezekiel Cooper, contained advertisements of the "Tract on Slavery."

noble enterprise. Many of the members of the first conference, who had from the beginning made battle agaist this giant iniquity, had, at this time, fallen in death, or had been superannuated by infirmities or years. And there were, no doubt, a few of those all the while, who had never entered heartily into the spirit of emancipation, and who, with the Rev. Jesse Lee, thought others were "going too far." Our Church, however, generally maintained the spirit and letter of her first position, till about the time of the organization of the first delegated general conference, in 1808; although it is evident there was a great diversity and remissness in the administration of her rules, particularly in those States which did not allow civil liberty to the emancipated. The conferences appear to have been at a loss to frame a rule which would meet the case, and consequently they left the adjustment of what was right to the administration of the preacher, and to the conscience of the slaveholder. And for this purpose, in 1796, the conference required that "no slaveholder shall be received into the society till the preacher who has the oversight of the circuit shall have spoken to him fully and faithfully on the subject of Slavery." The requirement of this conference [1796] at the last general one in Indianapolis, was made a matter of pleasantry, as a very easy penalty. But the pith of the whole matter lay in the strong anti-slavery feeling which possessed the preachers of that day, and which was deemed, by the conference, a sufficient offset on the part of the Church and the slave, against the encroachment or selfishness of the master. This power vested in the administrator, these modern Methodists did not, or could not, appreciate. But it was, in reality, "the keys," and many slaveholders were locked out of the Church by them in those days by the power conferred upon them by this requirement.

Unhappily, about the time our Church began to abate her former efforts, under the delusion that the leaven of the gospel would work out emancipation to the slave, several new events arose to give a new impulse to Slavery, and to defeat the work of emancipation which our Church had begun. Mr. Whitney, a New Englander, resident in Georgia, had invented the cotton gin, a machine by which the labor of one hundred hands could be performed by one, aided by a one horse power. Cotton, consequently, could be raised much cheaper, and the demand for it increased beyond all former precedent. Millions, who had never enjoyed its benefits, could now afford its use, and the demand has ever since gone on increasing in proportion to the reduction in its price. So that by the general laws of trade and improvement, that which brought comforts to millions, for a while has protracted the bondage of the slave.

The purchase of Louisiana also opened the rich alluvial lands in the lower valley of the Mississippi to the planters on the Atlantic, whose lands had already become exhausted. Emigration soon began to move westward; slaves rose in value, and the domestic slave trade soon commenced its horrid career.

Thus the prospect of sudden and immense wealth checked the

rising indignation against Slavery, and almost entirely nullified every ecclesiastical rule on the subject, and even invaded the constitutional article which, after 1808, forbade the foreign slave trade.

Our Church soon felt the deleterious effect of this new impulse. And another circumstance of long standing was continually lessening the anti-slavery feeling in our Church, and was consequently nullifying most of her efforts. The South made little or no provision for married preachers, and whenever one married he was obliged to locate. These marriages were generally in slaveholding families; and consequently the located preacher became interested in slave property. And these located preachers, in many cases, had been the most talented and influential members of the conference; and after their location, and consequent interest in Slavery, they continued to exert an immense influence over the younger and less experienced traveling preachers, and afterward claimed a representation in the general conference. In 1824, in form this claim was disallowed, but in reality they gained more than they had asked. The door was opened for their re-admission into the itinerancy without the least idea that they were to do itinerant work. For how could they carry their plantations, and from ten to a hundred slaves, around with them to the appointments? They were then necessarily accommodated; became mighty men—men of renown—elected to general conference; and ultimately these men directed the Church.

CHAPTER X.

SUCCESS OF FIRST EFFORTS TO EXTIRPATE SLAVERY.

GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION AMONG THE COLORED PEOPLE, 1780–1800 —GREAT ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH—UNPRECEDENTED EMANCIPATION— PREACHERS TRY TO BRING MASTER AND SLAVE UNDER THE SAME RULE —FAILED—SLAVERY IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH AND IN OURS CONTRASTED—MASTER'S DUTY—SLAVE'S DUTY—PRIMITIVE CHURCH HAD BUT ONE LAW FOR BOTH—IN EFFECT WE HAVE TWO—UNWRITTEN LAWS OF SLAVERY CARRIED OUT IN OUR CHURCH—THEY SANCTION IT—THEY MORE THAN NEUTRALIZE ALL WRITTEN TESTIMONY AGAINST IT.

WHEREVER the Word of God is faithfully preached, "it shall never return void; but it shall accomplish," in some way, "the thing whereunto it was sent."

The vigorous efforts which had been put forth by the early Methodists were not in vain. The storm of opposition which had been raised only tended to send the doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the subject of Slavery more rapidly over the land, and to deepen them more fully in the affections and understanding of the people. These efforts fixed her character at that period. In the language of Southern testimony, "Methodism at that day, whether at the North or South, was identified with the most deadly opposition to Slavery." The slave, and the colored people in general, had substantial evidence that the preachers were laboring both for their temporal and spiritual benefit.

Up to this time the Church was striving to establish among all the people, white and colored, the whole Gospel, a pure, unmutilated Christianity. She had not yet attempted to ingraft the religion that is from above on a slaveholding community. Her efforts were then to extirpate the one, that she might the more fully establish the other. How often Bishop Asbury exclaims in the following, or similar language: "O, when will liberty be extended to the sable sons of Africa? We trust the period will come."

When about leaving South Carolina for the North, he records his feelings for the poor slaves in the following tender effusions: "The poor Africans brought their blessings, and their wishes, and their prayers. Dear souls! May the Lord provide them pastors after his own heart." Again he says: "I am ready to conclude that we are not sent to the whites of this place (the extreme South), except to a very few, but to the poor Africans."

The preachers were laboring, not so much to make them good servants as to make them good, intelligent Christians. For this purpose they exhorted "our people to teach their slaves to read, then they would understand preaching much *better*." In addition to this, the conference in Charleston, 1790, "Resolved to establish Sunday Schools for poor children, both white and *black*."* How far this good purpose was carried into effect we have not the means of knowing; but it shows, at least, the spirit and sympathy of the Southern Church at this period to benefit the slaves; that even in Charleston, the foreign slave market, the hot-bed of the whole evil, and the seat of the Southern aristocracy, a Methodist conference should attempt to elevate the slaves and colored people to the advantages of Christianity and civilization.

But while the above efforts were put forth, the slaves at the South regarded the Methodists, especially the Methodist preachers, as their best friends. They knew them not only as non-slaveholders, but as laboring for their freedom. They looked upon them almost as angels sent from heaven. They passed through every obstacle to hear them. The Gospel which they preached was to them truly a joyful sound. It was to them life from the dead, the precursor of that jubilee which was to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof." In no period of our history was the proportional increase of the colored people in our Church so great. They almost literally crowded it. The following statistics, taken from the printed minutes, will show the proportion between the white and colored members in the slave States, and their respective increase per centum, during those years in which the greatest efforts were made for their emancipation. There may be some inaccuracies in estimating what circuits were situated within the bounds of the present slaveholding States, but the calculation will be sufficiently definite for our present purpose. As there was no distinction between the white and colored members until 1786, we can go no further back.

Years.	Whites.	Colored.	Annual Increase. Whites.	Per Cent. Colored.
1786	16,791	890		
1787	19,300	3,780	14	212
1788	26,242	6,422	36	69
1790	37,016	11,682	44	77
1793	38,413	15,308	3	34

From the above it will be seen that the increase of the colored membership in seven years was more than 1600 per centum, while that of the white members, for the same period, was only 128 per cent. The colored people, from being a mere fraction in 1786, increased within seven years to become between one third and one half, or more than 40 per cent. of the entire membership, within

* Jour. Vol. ii, p. 65.

and that there was unhappily a disposition in some of the more wealthy to make the discipline quadrate with Slavery. To check this tendency, and maintain the purity of the Church, the Conference of 1787 put forth the following solemn injunction in reference to the colored people:

"*We conjure all our ministers and preachers, by the love of God and the salvation of souls, and do require them, by all the authority that is invested in us, to leave nothing undone for the spiritual benefit and salvation of them within their respective circuits or districts; and for this purpose to embrace every opportunity of inquiring into the state of their souls, and to unite into society those who appear to have a real desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to meet such in class, and to exercise the whole Methodist discipline among them.*"

Now, why the necessity of this most solemn injunction, particularly in reference to the colored people? We conjure you by the love of God—by all the authority vested in us—*to exercise among the colored people the whole Methodist discipline.* The mystery of iniquity was now beginning to work; that fell evil which has brought Caste and Slavery into our Church, and is continually sending its blighting and disturbing influence over our beloved Zion. Our fathers had their apprehensions; but O, how fully have their fears been realized in subsequent concessions! The whole Methodist discipline has *not* been exercised in reference to the slaves. Had it been, it would have extirpated Slavery long since. The moral discipline of Christianity destroyed Slavery in the Roman Empire, and it would have done the same for our country if the ministers of the gospel had only enforced it. We want no better abolition book than the Bible, and no better "plan for emancipation" than simply that of the Christian discipline. Let these be fully recognized and applied, and Slavery would necessarily die, without the possibility of a resurrection. And further, the continued observance of these would always keep Slavery out of the Church.

The Contrast.—*Condition of Slaves in the Present and Primitive Churches contrasted.*—We purpose to show the great difference between the primitive churches and those in our own country, in reference to their respective administrations of Christian discipline among slaves. And in the showing, we think every one must see at once how widely the latter has departed from the former; and consequently from the Scriptures. And they will further see, the utter impossibility of abolishing Slavery while the present ecclesiastical administration shall continue as it is. Before the peaceful removal of Slavery, there must be a return to the primitive and scriptural mode of administration in regard to slaves.

The primitive Church recognized the converted slaves as full and acceptable members of the body of Christ. Whatever their civil or social condition might have been among the heathens, when they came into the Christian Church they came in just as other con-

verts, and like them were entitled to all the rights and immunities of the new relation. They were "*one* in Christ: where there was neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; but Christ was all, and in all." There is not the least intimation in the New Testament, or during the first two centuries, that there was any difference ecclesiastically, by special rule or administration, between the bond or the free members of the Church.

To those who were under the yoke in Slavery to heathen masters, the Apostle and the Church enjoined obedience. Not that the master had any right to this service, but for another reason; a reason, in passing, which was wholly inapplicable to Christian masters, viz.: "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." In a word, that the Christian slave should act to his heathen master on the principle of doing good for evil—on the same principle of "turning the other cheek," which our Saviour had enjoined. That in this way he might give to his heathen master such a splendid exhibition of Christian morality, contrasting generosity on the one hand with covetousness on the other, that the master's opposition to Christianity might be broken down, so that he might not only embrace the truth, but that he might ultimately give the slave his liberty.

But, on the contrary, the directions given to those who had "believing masters," were altogether of a different character. They could not have been enjoined upon the above principle, for the masters were already Christians, and they did not need this reflective influence to make them such. And further, as we shall show, the directions given were really such as were wholly inconsistent for the relation of master and slave. Thus,

The servants in the Apostolic Church were not "*to despise*" their former master—not to think ill of them on account of anything which had taken place in their heathen state. The past was to have been forgiven and forgotten. "Old things now were to be done away, and all things to become new."

"*But rather do them service.*"—rather serve them still, than to work for others, perhaps heathen masters. Here there is certainly a choice, or a preference between employers. The choice is obvious in our version, but still more so in the original [αλλα μαλλον]. Webster defines rather, "in *preference.*" Now this would have been tantalizing, to have told the Christian servant to do service, *rather* in preference to his former master since he had now become a Christian, if the former were yet really a slave and consequently had not the least choice in the matter. But on the contrary, the apostle went on so far as to reason with those who had believing masters, in reference to their staying with them, since they had now become Christians.

Because they are brethren, "*beloved*," and they belonged to the same household of faith with themselves, and are equally beloved by the same common Saviour.

"*Because they are faithful*," and they will consequently do an honest part towards them, which perhaps heathen employers

might not do, in giving them full fair wages for their work. And finally,—

They are "partakers of the benefit," joint partakers. Schrevelius renders the original word "*to receive in turn*, as a kindness; to assist. Parkhurst translates it "to take *hold on the opposite side.*" And Piscator says the word denotes properly a bundle or a burden, through which a stick in passed, and each one on the opposite side takes hold of the ends of it, and thus they mutually benefited each other. Now this view would not at all suit the respective parties in a state of Slavery. For in this case the burden would have been all on the one side, and the slave would have had to work for another, without getting anything more for it than the horse gets, which is simply enough to keep him in working order.

Nearly the whole of the above may be deemed a digression, but it should be remembered that this verse, I. *Tim. vi.* 2, is regarded as the main pillar on which Slavery rests in the New Testament. It was upon the words "believing masters," that Dr. Wilbur Fisk spread out his celebrated "demonstration," that there were slaveholders in the Apostolic Church; a demonstration, or imaginary one, as we humbly think, which was soon endorsed by nearly all our chief ministers, and which certainly, without the intention of the learned and excellent Doctor, has done perhaps more to rivet Slavery in our Church and in our country, than the direct arguments of any other man living or deceased. It was actually received by millions as oracular. Arguments against it were deemed unworthy of notice. Locke has truly said "that authority keeps in ignorance and error more people than all other causes." But to return—

So also when the master who had been recently converted from heathenism, presented himself for admission into the Apostolic Church, he was required to "give unto his servants that which is just and equal." From this there could have been no departure in the Apostolic Church. The first word *just*, is a legal term, and must refer to some law, rule or usage. When we say a thing is just, we immediately compare it in our minds with some standard. Now what was the standard to which the apostle must have referred?

It could not have referred to any, slave code specifically revealed from heaven for the government of slaves, as a distinct class, from free men. Because no such specific code can be found in the bible. The precepts of the New Testament are given to the whole race, without granting anything to any one class in particular. And further, they are all founded on the principles of substantial equity to every individual.

It could not have referred to any law or rule among the heathen Romans, for the slave was in their hands without law, and by custom their masters might torture, starve, and even kill them to fatten the fish in their ponds. And further, any reference to such usages would prove too much. It would prove 1. That the gospel sanctioned the above Roman system, with all its atrocities and mur-

ders. 2. That it allowed their continuance. 3. That they were the pattern after which succeeding Christians were to copy.

Now in the absence of all such suppositions, we believe that "*just*" has a reference in this, as in all other cases, to the common law of heaven, to keep judgment and do justice, for God is no respector of persons; and that this, the eternal and the all-pervading law of God was then to be applied to the slave as to any other person: and that it is just as applicable at this moment to every slave in the rice swamps or on the cotton fields of the South, as it is applicable to any other human being in God's creation. And what an impious assumption, to say that this standing law of God does not apply to slaves! But if you apply it to slaves, as the primitive Christians did, you necessarily make them free. You cannot avoid the consequence. And this application of God's law to the slave is the plan of the gospel for his immediate emancipation. And it was just in this light that the Southern Methodists, in our last general conference, viewed the application of this law, "the giving that which was just and equal;" "for the doing of this," they said "would make free men of them."

Their eloquent leader objected to the proposed rule, which, he says, "provides for giving them [the slaves] such compensation as shall be just and equal," and for their proper treatment. That makes a new test, and why? It changes entirely the relation of master and slave. "It makes the slave a free man," he affirmed. So it would, and so it did in the primitive Church. And so God designed that it should in every church, and in every age and country. And thus, the requisition of the apostle upon every master when becoming a Christian, to give what was just and equal, was, according to Southern showing, the very thing that made the slave a free man. And what an effective and beautiful plan of emancipation was this! It was God's plan, and we need no other.

The second requirement of the master for admission was to give the slave that which was equal. This, like the other word just, refers not to what heathens gave, or to any supposed inferior class, but on the contrary it referred to the masters themselves, and to the great law of reciprocity. That the converted master (knowing that God was no respecter of persons; that the slave was or might be his brother) was therefore not to take any advantage which the civil law might allow him over another; but that, on the contrary, he should concede to his former slave an *equal* right with himself, to use those talents which God had given the slave for his own, and not for his master's peculiar benefit. And this again would a free man of him. So it would, and so it was intended.

The third item in the master's duty. "*And ye masters do the same things unto them.*" These words must refer more to the character of the action than to any particular item in it. That is, the actions of the master and servant were both to partake equally of the same *moral qualities.* The servant was to act "in singleness of heart." So the master, having no sinister motives in his conduct

towards the servant, having no selfish regard to his own profit or pleasure above that of the servant, much less to secure the former at the entire destruction of the latter.

The servant was to do the will of God in reference to the master, from the heart, fully, liberally. So also the master to the servant, doing the will of God in the same manner to the slave heartily and fully. The will of God most evidently is, that every one should have an opportunity of cultivating and elevating his moral nature; that he should have the liberty of improving those talents which God had given him, in that way in which he who is accountable for them should think the best. But what master can be said to do the will of God in the above manner, while he keeps his fellow-creature a prisoner for life, for every slave is a prisoner; while he takes from him all his earnings; and while he debars him from the means by which he might become enlightened and intelligent?

The fourth and last item in the master's duty; "*forbear threatening.*" Threatening is the setting forth of pains and penalties to intimidate, as a means to force one to do something. There are *two* elements in government: one operates on its subjects by fear, and it has not been improperly called *brute* government; the other by an appeal to the consciousness of right and wrong, and it is called rational government. In every species of slave government there must be an appeal to fear, which fear can only be sustained by threatening and its consequent punishment—the very thing which is forbidden to the master. We do not say that the master is always threatening, but we do say that punishment on disobedience is always understood, without which there could be no Slavery.

God has implanted in our nature an appropriate incentive to work, which is, the fruits of our labor; but when this is taken away, and Slavery always takes it away, then there must be some other incentive applied, which is the very thing the Apostle forbids. It is madness, fanaticism, to imagine that we can change the laws of mind, or invert the laws of God. God has given to every man, of whatever nation, color or condition, an instinctive desire to direct himself, to enjoy his liberty, and to have his own earnings; and no system of man can ever change this constitution of our being.

Now, we think, in analysing these parts of the master's duty, that we have established the position, that the duties which the Apostolic Church required from all masters are such, that if they were carried out, they must necessarily make every slave in the world a free man. And then, consequently, that the astounding fact, that there are in our country nearly two millions slaves yet held by the professed members of the Christian Church, is in itself an alarming evidence that the true Christian discipline, in reference to slaves, has never yet been carried out in those churches. They must be criminally negligent before God and in the estimation of Christendom. We have dwelt for some time on the nature of Apostolic discipline, from a conviction of its importance. The simple application of the principles of Christianity to church membership, is

the gospel plan for emancipation, and like all God's works, it is at once effective, beautiful, and harmonious in all its operations.

We now return to the contrast, and present some other views in this matter. When the slave comes into the Church at the South, and on our slaveholding border, he comes in *as a slave.* And he brings with him into this new relation, all the disabilities, or more properly, the entire state of chattelship which the secular law has fastened upon him. And so the master, when he comes into the Church, comes as a *slaveholder*, and he brings with him into it all the unscriptural powers and assumptions, which the slave laws have conferred upon him. And now the respective parties are *not* brought together under the same gospel discipline, as the apologists for the present continuation of Slavery appear to claim, that is, under "the one law for the home-born and the stranger," or under the great law of reciprocity of the New Testament; but they are recognized in the Church as under a wholly different code. The usages, the *non-scriptæ leges* of Slavery, which these churches have already adopted, baptized, and virtually recognized as their ecclesiastical law in this matter, place the parties in very dissimilar relations. The one possessed of unbounded right over the other. And the other possessing no right whatever, receiving whatever he may receive from the Church or his master as a mere gratuity. And thus, these usages, by the means of this double administration, has really, in reference to the slave, all the force of written and positive law.

Perhaps no Southern church has had the effrontery to write out a slaveholding discipline in form; but all slaveholding churches, both on our border and everywhere else, must have such a one in fact; that is, they have such a one through their two-fold administration, one according to the written, and the other according to the unwritten discipline; or in other words, one for the master and one for the slave, or otherwise Slavery could not exist in the Church for a single day.

Now, all such churches, and ours with them, may have ten thousand "testimonies against Slavery" on the statute book, or in the discipline; but while they adopt slave usages, and administer the affairs of the Church by them, such testimony might just as well be in the Koran as where they are. And such churches really give to Slavery the best authentication of which they are able—a far far better one than mere statutory law. The one is only in the book, or discipline; but the other is an open sanction, and a visible, demonstrable acknowledgment of the legal existence of Slavery in the Church by action, which can be easily seen and known of all men. And thus, this open saction of the legality of Slavery in the Church, is much stronger than any verbal declaration can be against it, inasmuch as actions are always stronger and more convincing than mere words.

Thus, according to these unwritten laws, or slave usages—

The slave member has no ecclesiastical rights. He has no right of suit against his master, or any free man. His master may

Now there is but *one* outline of moral discipline to be found in the New Testament, and this is to apply substantially to the whole household of faith, for in it they are all recognized as brethren. If, then, this one rule or discipline were to be exercised in reference to master and slave immediately on their entrance into the Christian Church, Slavery could not survive the administration one hour. But as we have already shown, to accommodate Slavery there are in effect two: one for the privileged order, and another for the unprivileged, or rather no privileged, class of those whom they call church members. And it is not a little surprising that those who suppose the New Testament recognizes the relation of master and slave, should have forgotten to hunt up a corresponding discipline to sustain such a relation, for without such a Church discipline the relation must necessarily cease. The one administration would kill it.

This double manner of administering Christian discipline will will never abolish Slavery to the end of time; so far from it, it becomes, in fact, the bulwark and support of it; it gives a full and well-understood ecclesiastical sanction and recognition to the whole system. And further, it is a solemn and awful truth, that this kind of Christianity, coming to the slave through this loathsome system, presented and administered by slaveholding ministers, and those who countenance Slavery, makes millions of these poor creatures "abhor the sacrifice of the Lord," and think that the whole of religion is a cunningly devised fable between the minister and his master to keep him in bondage to work for both of them. This is a startling consideration, and not half sufficiently thought of by the churches in our country. We never can know the real sentiments of the slave in regard to Christianity, until we allow him freely to express his own views. We ere continually hearing but one side of the whole matter.

In conclusion, we are fully persuaded that Church privileges would have removed this curse from our land if the ministers of the gospel had only admitted the slaves to them. But they have not; Christian institutions have been set aside to accommodate those of Slavery. O, how lamentable, to see ministers of the gospel strike the banners of the cross, which ought to float fearlessly and triumphantly over every system, and to see them basely retreat before the foul fury of Slavery, or surrender to its impious assumptions the institutions of heaven, the Sabbath, marriage, and nearly every Church privilege! Such a partial, mutilated administration of Christian discipline vitiates everything within its reach. And such a base succumbing to Slavery is a reproach to our common Christianity, and it is not only a stumbling block to millions of poor slaves, in reference to their reception of the gospel, but it is filling the entire South, and indeed all our land, with infidelity.

CHAPTER XI.

FELLOWSHIP WITH SLAVEHOLDERS.

THE CHURCH THE EMBODIMENT OF CHRISTIANITY—TWO WAYS TO SUSTAIN AN EVIL—THE SCRIPTURAL RULE—THE COVETOUS—THE RAILER—THE EXTORTIONER—MORAL HERESIES—NOTHING COHESIVE IN SLAVERY—IT CAN NOT STAND WITHOUT OUTWARD SUPPORT.

THE Church should be the visible embodiment of Christianity; her members should be the light of the world, reflecting that which was to chase away the world's darkness; she should be "the pattern of the heavenly," attracting and assimilating the whole world to herself. Hence it was that the apostles were so careful to keep the Church pure and separate from sin and sinners.

For two hundred years Slavery has taken refuge in the Bible; and to this day it leans upon the Church of God as its main support. There is nothing cohesive or self-supporting in Slavery; it is an unnatural state of society, and it cannot stand of itself. Take away the extraneous props which surround it, and it necessarily falls to pieces; and consequently every one should examine whether he is giving any support to it or not.

There are two ways by which one may sustain and perpetuate an evil. By either directly practicing it themselves, or indirectly, by supporting or countenancing those who do practice it; and the latter, in many cases, can really give the more efficient and abiding support to the evil. Thus Jehoshaphat sustained Ahab, and Ahab sustained idolatry. The axiom is, things which are equal to one and the same thing, are equal to each other, and so it is in reference to Slavery.

Abolitionists, however, do not set in judgment on the souls of slaveholders. They can tell, according to God's Word, what is right or wrong, for the boundaries of these are fixed in the Bible; but they cannot tell the amount of invincible prejudice, invincible ignorance, or many other causes which may obstruct the moral vision of other men. To their own Master all such must stand or fall.

But this avowal is no reason why they should fellowship with slaveholders, and by so doing, give to Slavery its most efficient support. They regard the holding and the using of a fellow-being in the condition of a slave as *prima facie* evidence of sin, and as such, they are bound in conscience to bear their testimony against it, and to withdraw their support from it. And this procedure is neither new

nor fanatical; it is as old and as orthodox as the practice of the primitive Church. St. Paul says, "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or extortioner; with such an one not to eat."—1 Cor. v. xi. Here are six kind of persons with whom the Christian Church should have no fellowship, and of whom it is said, in the next chapter, that such "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And three out of the six we think most evidently include the slaveholders.

The Covetous.—The lexicographers say the original word means "*to have more;*" and Parkhurst, *more than one's due, or share.* Webster defines it *to desire inordinately, in a bad sense.* Now the slaveholder not only desires, but actually takes the fruits of another's labor without compensation, and appropriates it to his own exclusive benefit. In the text, the desire, the very state of mind, is condemned; but to carry out that state of mind, and to continue in it must certainly be worse; this must be the highest grade of covetousness. If it is wrong to covet our neighbor's ox, it must certainly be worse to covet the neighbor himself, ox, and all that he hath. Now, I defy the world to produce a greater embodiment of covetousness than that which is concentrated in the slaveholder, who not only cherishes this forbidden state of mind, which desires that which belongs to another, but who actually holds and uses it, and finally takes and transmits it to his children after him. Nothing can go beyond this.

The Railer—"*Who uses reproachful language.*" Out of the heart the mouth speaketh, and such speaking shows the moral turpitude of the heart. Allow Thomas Jefferson to become bibical commentator, in this case. "The whole commerce," he says, "between master and slave, is a perpetual exercise of the most *boisterous passions*; the most unremitting despotisms on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other." It is folly to deceive ourselves; the element in slave government is *fear*, excited and kept up by threatening, railing, reproachful language, the very thing which is forbidden by the apostle: and if these are not successful, they are followed by pain and punishment.

The Extortioner—"*Who wrests any thing from a person by force, duress, or authority.*'—Webster. Thus the pseudo Christian slaveholder takes the advantage of an iniquitous law—a law in violation of every principle of justice, as recognized by civilized or savage men—and extorts, twists out from the slave, as the word imports, the hard earnings of a poor defenseless man, and then appropriates them to his own exclusive benefit. Jacob took advantage of the starvation of his brother, and extorted from him his birth-right; but Esau himself was spared, and he bravely recovered himself. But not so the slaveholder; he spares nothing; he makes a clean sweep; he plucks down "the image of God," converts him to chattelship, and makes him a mere tool, subsidiary to his own gratification. Is not this extortion? and what a giant extortion is that of the 300,000 slaveholders, many of them church members, who taking

the advantage of a bad law, are continually extorting, wresting, twisting out the sweat, the blood, (and in thousands of instances, the very lives) of nearly 4,000,000 human beings, that they may live on their hard earnings! Are such fit persons to be fellowshiped with as members of Jesus Christ? Who can bid them God speed, and not be partakers of their evil deeds?

Again, St. John, in his Second Epistle, says, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds." These words, no doubt, primarily referred to our Saviour. But by amplification or implication, they may refer to what our Saviour taught. Now, these are *moral heresies*, as well as theological ones; and if Slaveholding, the holding and the using of a human being, one made in the image of God, is not moral heresy, I know of none—there can be none.

Dr. A. Clarke says, "He that acts towards him as if he considered him a Christian brother, and sound in the faith, puts it into his power to deceive others by thus apparently accrediting his ministry" or Christianity.

And further, he is also an actual partaker with him in his evil deeds. Like Jehoshaphat, "he helps the ungodly, and loves them that hate the Lord;" and as sure as it resulted in the one case, it will in the other, "therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Those who fellowship with slaveholders, do, in effect, fellowship with Slavery—do really give it a better support than the slaveholder himself.

I verily believe that the Methodist Episcopal Church can no longer be idle in this matter of Slavery, and be innocent. More than thirty years ago we spent the whole of the real anti-slavery capital which our venerated fathers had left us. And at present, notwithstanding our ever and anon repetition of anti-slaveryism, the tendency and influence of our Church is *for* Slavery, for its quiet, peaceful continuance in the Church, under present circumstances. Why, the veriest traders in the souls and bodies of men can desire nothing more than this. To let them alone is just what they want—what the devil wanted in our Saviour's time, when they were in full possession. "Let us alone, what have we to do with Thee?"

Our Church should cease to countenance or tolerate any longer this enormous evil. She should cease to hold fellowship with those Churches in the South, on the border, or in any country which will not obey the laws of Christ. Until at least they shall have enforced upon their own communicants, the observance of what Christ required; the practice of the most common, self-evident principles of justice between man and man; the recognition of Christian marriage; the keeping of the holy Sabbath; the privilege of reading God's word, together with the right of suit and testimony to all their members, so that the integrity and moral purity of our common Christianity may be maintained. Those who do not observe these

laws of Christ, are not "Constitutional Methodists." They are "not of us;" and if every slaveholder on the border should go out from us, the Church would gain immensely by their absence.

But who are they who are thus "troubling our Israel?" Rev. A. J. Phelps, at Indianapolis, calculated them at a minority of 1 to 700. "But," he said, it seems "this *inferior* minority must be sustained at any expense. The moral force of the whole Church must defend oppressors. Church authorities and Church papers must apologize for the nefarious villainy. The press must be muzzled, and every expedient seized upon to hold the 700 in check, and to give the 1 the ascendancy."

As we have already said, remove the extraneous supports from Slavery, and it falls to the ground. All history confirms this statement. When the French Revolution took away the army and navy from St. Domingo, Slavery fell at once in that beautiful island. When the Peninsular War in Europe required the concentration of all the Spanish forces, for the defence of the mother country, almost immediately society reverted again to its natural form in Mexico; and consequently, in that country about 50,000 negro and 2,000,000 Indian slaves obtained their liberty. The same event took place in most of the South American states. The British navy for a long while upheld Slavery in the West Indies, by continually crushing the frequent risings of the slaves, who, but for this naval power, would have soon rid themselves of their effeminate and luxurious masters. And in our own country, it is the various influences at the North, which at this day sustains Slavery in the southern states.

The North indirectly hold the slaves; while the South directly use them, and live upon their earnings. And as soon as the views and sympathies of the former are corrected, both politically, ecclesiastically, socially and commercially, this curse and blight of our country will cease in the latter; but never, until then, unless it ceases by a civil war.

History cannot furnish an instance of an entire slaveholding country unconnected with any one that was free, which ever perpetuated Slavery within itself, for any considerable length of time. The thing is impossible; for in a state of slavery, all the elements of a good government, such as confidence, integrity, and mutual interest, are entirely wanting. In 1814, how easily the British took the city of Washington, our slaveholding capital! And how easily, too, they could have retained it, and subdued all the southern states, if it had not been for the fear of *northern* soldiers. Could such a small armament as this, at any time, have penetrated so far into any other state of the Union, than a slaveholding one? Yes, it is the North which continues Slavery; and it is heart-sickening to estimate at what an expense. O! it is lamentable to contemplate the thousands of lives, and the millions of treasure, which are every year swallowed up in this infernal maelstrom, for the support of Slavery!

Now, as this scourge of our race cannot sustain itself, but is dependant for its continuance on exterior support, it becomes every

one who fears God, and regards the good of his fellow being, to examine narrowly what assistance he *may be giving* to it. And for this support, whether it be direct or indirect, every individual is answerable to God; for every one who allows himself to be a vehicle for the transmission of this evil to the next generation, sins not only against God and his own soul, but against posterity. He transmits to unborn millions an accumulating curse, and necessarily leaves the world worse than he found it.

And here again, as in the case of slaveholding, we bring in that great efficient reformatory principle, individual responsibility. Let no one wait until the State or the Church moves in this matter. God holds every one accountable, not through the Church, the State, or the community in general, but directly and immediately to himself. This individual responsibility was the leading idea of the Reformation, and soon shook the power of Papacy throughout Europe. And this individual responsibility must be the efficient principle in every reformation. There can be no thorough and lasting reform without it.

In the anti-slavery enterprise, ingenuity has exhausted itself in planning devices to destroy the impulsive efforts of this reformatory principle. The figments of "expediency, circumstances, organic sins," and various other incomprehensible mystifications, have labored long and hard to change the issue, to transfer the blame from the individuals to some impersonality, or to quiet the conscience, by attempting to prove that individuals could do nothing in this matter. These anodynes have, for years, stupified or paralyzed the moral sensibilities of the Church and nation; but, thank God, their influence is passing away; the spirit of slumber is giving place to that of vigilance and activity. The public conscience is waking up for a movement, in despite of all these sophisms, and the minister or the politician who will place himself in the breach, to arrest its progress will be prostrated by it as by a whirlwind.

As a Christian, let him withdraw fellowship from all those who are slaveholders; by not communing with them, nor hearing their ministers preach, nor inviting slaveholders into our pulpits.

But the most common pretext for holding fellowship with slaveholders, is that there are some good Christians among them. So there may be many among the Romanists who go weekly to the confessional and bow before the crucifix; but this is no reason that we should hold religious fellowship with them, and endorse their spurious creed and idolatrous worship. Abolitionists do not sit in judgment on the guilt or innocence of slaveholders. They believe that Slaveholding is *prima facie* evidence of that which is forbidden in the word of God; that it is outward visible evidence of the existence of covetousness, extortion, and other concomitant sins in those who practice it, and consequently that with such Christians they should not eat. But in regard to the heart they do not judge; God only searches it and knows it. They cannot pronounce in reference to it, nor concerning the invincibility of prejudices, nor the want of information which may be with the slaveholder. Whether guilty or inno-

cent, he has put himself in a wrong position; in a position in which he gives his name, his influence, and the whole weight of his moral and religious character, to the support of that entire system which the close-thinking and far-seeing John Wesley called emphatically "the sum of all villanies."

And in his case, the better the man the worse is the deed. The more moral worth he has, in the estimation of the world, the better support he can give to Slavery; and consequently they who sustain him in his wrong position, sustain the position itself, with all its concomitant sins.

We would say, in the next place, to every man as a citizen: withdraw your support from Slavery, by refusing to vote for any man who is a slaveholder, or for any other man that upholds Slavery. In this way every voter can most effectively reach the very strongholds of Slavery in our country. And we conceive it to be every man's duty to do it. Every consideration arising from the past and present, urges him to do it; his duty to his God, to humanity, to his country, and to the unborn millions who are to come after him, call upon him to exercise the power now in his hands, to arrest the continuance and progress of this scourge of the human race. It was a maxim among the ancients, that he who had it in his power to save life and did not do it was himself guilty of murder.

Let none suppose that individual efforts can do no good. The preaching of a few Galilean fishermen overthrew the religion of the pagan world. During the last twelve or fifteen years, much light has been diffused. It is now collecting, and will soon shine forth to destroy this foul lump of deformity with the brightness of its coming. At the creation, light was created and existed some days before it was collected and shone out. Public sentiment is in a state of transition. It is coming around right. Many who were once violently opposed to anti-slavery measures, have already become their warm and active friends. And very many others who imagine that they still retain their former opinions and practices, are in reality advancing with almost railroad speed to the full standard of abolition orthodoxy. Like the passenger in the car, they imagine that every thing is moving and coming to them, while in truth they are rapidly going forward themselves.

CHAPTER XII.

FUTURE ACTION OF THE CHURCH.

UNDO WHAT HAS BEEN DONE UNCONSTITUTIONALLY—REPEAL THE CHAPTER ON SLAVERY—NO CHANGE OF THE GENERAL RULE NECESSARY—THE REQUISITION TO EXCLUDE SLAVERY IS IN THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR CHURCH ALREADY—GENERAL CONFERENCE SHOULD RE-AFFIRM THE DECLARATION OF 1780—GIVE A JUDICIAL DECISION IN REGARD TO THE MEANING OF THE RULE—PROHIBIT THE OBSERVANCE OF THE UNWRITTEN LAWS OF SLAVERY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH—ALLOW TO EVERY MEMBER THE RIGHT OF SUIT—RIGHT OF TESTIMONY—RECOGNITION OF MARRIAGE—TO REQUIRE ALL MEMBERS, BOND OR FREE, TO OBSERVE THE LAWS OF CHRISTIANITY, WHETHER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SLAVE LAWS OR NOT.

BUT now, in conclusion, what is to be done? No one should find fault who is unable to point out a better way. It was esteemed a Roman virtue never to despair of the Republic. Great evils have been suffered to come into the Methodist Episcopal Church, yet we do not despair. No Church, from first to last, has done more for the colored man in North America than ours has done. The evils, however, of which we have spoken, will never cure themselves; but on the contrary, if not arrested, they will go on increasing until they ruin all connected with them. The crisis must be met. By a series of concessions our Church is put in a false position. Although constitutionally anti-slavery or abolitionist, her present bearing and influence are almost altogether on the other side. The slaveholding and extreme conservative portion of the Church, at present, will not move in the matter, for they are contented with our present ecclesiastical attitude. They have the possession, and they can desire no more. If anything is done to change our present position and influence, it must be done by those who are opposed to Slavery. Now we say that our Church must be brought back to the true foundation, to the anti-slavery basis on which she was originally founded.

In the accomplishment of this object, we have only to pursue a plain, obvious course; no theories, no experiments, no transcendentalism. All that is necessary, is simply to *undo that which has been unconstitutionally done.* Our position is, that in her constitution, the Methodist Episcopal Church is anti-slavery or abolitionist. This constitutes our entire creed on this subject. From this belief all our measures should emanate; this conviction should animate our hope, as it will clothe our words and doings with authority. And

this belief, that Slavery is a sin, must influence our plans, regulate our fellowship, and direct us in the selection of all general church officers. In this discrimination we injure no one; we invade no rights; we disfranchise no real member of the Church. We embrace all within the *constitutional pale*, as brethren beloved, equally entitled to a community of rights and privileges.

It seems to us that the next general conference should separate our Church wholly from all connection with Slavery, and present her before Christendom in her true and real anti-slavery character. And for this purpose she should, in the first place, repeal and remove forever from the discipline the entire chapter on Slavery. It legalizes Slavery in the membership. It is a dishonor to our Church where it now stands. Slavery cannot properly be the subject of law, for it is in itself essentially the abrogation of all law.

Secondly, it is not necessary to change the general rule on Slavery. There is really no need of it.* It is sufficiently anti-slavery or abolitionist as it now stands; only execute it. For,—

1. The requisition of the Scriptures, "To give that which is just and equal," that is, an honest and adequate compensation to servants, and to all other persons, for services rendered, and for value received, *is* already in the moral constitution of our Church. And it is there stronger and more authoritatively than any ecclesiastical enactment of the general conference could possibly make it. For the observance of the most obvious duties of justice and honesty, we need no special rule. We might as well have one against gambling, and another against robbery. The carrying out the above divine requisition is only carrying out the essential and indispensable principles of our Christianity; the very abnegation of which would unmake Christianity itself. It would subvert the entire basis of our holy religion. But, says the South, "that would make the slave a free man." So it would, and that is what we want, and consequently there is no need for a change of the rule to accomplish it.

2. But further, it would be wholly unnecessary, even ecclesiastically, for it would be a mere *actum agere*—the doing of that which is already done. For our rule on Slavery as it now stands, considered either grammatically, morally, or historically, prohibits all *enslaving*, without any regard whatever to inheritance or circumstances. And what more could a special enactment or an amendment do?

3. The attempt to change our constitutional law on this subject would be making a false concession. It would be conceding that our Church is now, and always has been, constitutionally a slaveholding one. And that the vigorous efforts which her founders put forth, during the first thirty years of her existence, to root out Slavery, stem and stalk, from her border, were nothing more than an unmeaning ado. And that her subsequent and continuous calls, through the ten thousand disciplines which she is sending out every year, have ever been, to say the least of it, a palpable contradiction, or something which looks too much like hypocrisy.

* See Addenda.

And finally, an attempt to change our organic law, in the present state of matters, would be wholly useless. For the same captiousness which construes the present rule as legalizing Slavery, would equally misconstrue the meaning of the restrictive rule itself, when its object was to abolish Slavery. This is not theoretic. For already Southern construction to the rule has been given to this effect. The restrictive rule requires for the change of any one of the general rules, a vote of "three fourths of all the members of the several annual conferences." Now the construction referred to is this: "the three fourths of the members of several annual conferences does not mean," say they, "three fourths of all the members in the aggregate, but three fourths of the members of each and every annual conference separately and singly."

Thus, should 4,000 traveling preachers, out of the 4,788, which constitute the whole body, vote to change the rule, any one of the forty conferences—say, for illustration, the Arkansas conference of 26 members gives but 17 votes, out of her 26, for a change—then again, for the want of the one vote in this conference, the judgment and the will of the thousands in the other conferences would be set aside, and the entire Church would be wedded indissolubly to Slavery forever.

Yet if, for the sake of form, or to meet the views of objecting brethren, or to cut off the very possibility of litigation in civil law, the conferences, in their wisdom, should go through the process of removing the restriction to change the rule, let it be done with the understanding that the process was for something like the above reasons, and not because they believed that we had been constitutionally a slaveholding Church.

And now, thirdly. Having repealed the chapter on Slavery, and having left the general rule on it untouched, the next general conference should—

Re-affirm the declaration of sentiment which was known and acknowledged by the whole Church at the time she was founded, viz.:—that Slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature; hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and the doing that which we would not that others should do to us and ours. And that we do still hold in the deepest abhorrence the PRACTICE of Slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means.

As the general conference is a judicial, as well as a legislative body, let it in its judiciary capacity give an exposition or an authoritative decision in reference to the rule on Slavery. They can do this with great propriety; for the rule was not one of their own making, and they are the highest judiciary in our Church to whom, consequently, the ultimate decision of the law must come. They might, at least, according to *our* views, affirm something like the following:

1. "That the buying and selling of men, women and children with the intention to enslave them," was never intended, and never should

be so construed as to set aside the requirements of justice and equity which are contained in God's written word; which word, the Church receives as the only rule, and the sufficient rule both of faith and practice. That the above rule was never meant to release any of our members, or any other person from the moral obligation to give that which is just and equal, a full, fair equivalent, wages, or compensation for work done or value received, to every child of man, wholly irrespective of his color, country or condition.*

3. That every good and acceptable member in our Church, without regard to color and condition, shall have the right, according to Matthew xviii, 6, 15–18, of private expostulation; for the redress of grievance; and that in case this fail, he shall be allowed an ecclesiastical suit, according to the discipline.

4. That the testimony of every person, without regard to color or condition, who is accredited for veracity, shall be received in all our ecclesiastical courts.

5. That there shall be no distinction in the administration of the law of marriage, between those members who are bond and those who are free.

6. That no person who is a Sabbath-breaker, or who is in any other way a violator of other laws of Christianity, shall be continued in the Church; and that in all those cases in which our members are coerced by ungodly masters, or by unscriptural laws to do so, that they be taught in those cases to obey God rather than man, and to endure the consequences as did the primitive Christians; and that

* Although the general conference has no right to change the words, or to alter the sense of the general rules, yet in cases of disagreement in the construction of them, in its judicial capacity it has a right, and for the sake of peace, in many cases, it *ought* to give an authoritative decision in regard to the meaning of the law. For,—1. Every one does this for himself in regard to the Scriptures. 2. The general conference did this in effect when it required baptism and a confession of faith as tests of membership. 3. These rules are *general*, and certainly the highest judiciary in the Church should have the right to direct their application and to expound their meaning.

For instance, we have a rule against "buying and selling goods which have not paid the duty." Now suppose one, or ten thousand, of our members should, by inheritance or otherwise, get thousands of such uncustomed goods into their possession for their own use; and suppose, in bar of the general rule, they should plead that the receiving, holding and using of such goods, were not buying or selling them, and that it was only the latter that the rule prohibited. In this case, and it is a perfect parallel to the one on Slavery, would not the general conference have a right, and should they not exercise it to decide something like this. That the object and design of the rule was to prevent any one from cheating the government, and that the receiving, holding and using of such goods are clearly within the prohibition; that they abhorred the *practice* of cheating the government, and that it must be immediately discontinued. Who in this case would think that the conference had transcended its constitutional bounds? Or that, to prevent the members of the Church from defrauding the government, that it would be necessary to change the whole constitution of the Church, and to alter the general rules so as to make it read, "the buying, selling, holding or using goods that have not paid the duty." Now we do most religiously think that the cases are parallel, and there is just as much necessity to change the general rules in regard to smuggling, as there is in regard to slaveholding.

the entire Church sympathise with them in their sufferings, and that the said Church shall use all the means in her power to obtain redress for these sufferings; and to secure for them and all other Christians in slaveholding states, the unrestricted liberty of conscience, and the right of public worship.

Finally, that according to the requirement of our Church in 1787, "That the whole Methodist discipline be exercised among them," the slaves and the people of color, as it is among other members. This, then, is all that we need; and all this the Church of our choice must have. This in itself is amply sufficient for the entire abolition of Slavery; for we can have no better abolition book than the bible, and no better plan for the emancipation of Slavery, than the enforcement of Christian discipline.

ADDENDA.

Since writing the above, it has been suggested that it would be better to pass through the Disciplinary process by changing the general rule on Slavery. Although we do not believe that this is really necessary; for we are fully of the opinion, that the simple execution of Christian Church discipline, would effectually extirpate Slavery; yet we do not object to this process, if it be passed through *pro forma*, with the understanding that the Methodist Episcopal Church is not now, and never has been constitutionally slaveholding.

This constitutional difficulty is really an "after thought." Our fathers never thought of it. The same rule was in the discipline at least in 1789, and while they were making every effort to "extirpate this abomination," they never appear to have imagined that they were infringing on any constitutional law in driving Slavery out of the Church. Even the delegated conference of 1812, when they "authorized each annual conference to form their own regulations relative to buying and selling slaves," seem never to have thought that they were violating the constitution, or that it was necessary to send the above around to the annual conferences for their concurrence. In fact, "the constitutional bar" is a new doctrine, sprung up about twenty-eight years ago by some of our chief ministers, on the present agitation of the slave question. Yet, for the sake of form, this process may be passed through.

1. It may be well to accede to the views of those who think that the constitutional process is necessary.

2. It may simplify the whole matter by removing at once every issue of a doubtful character, and by keeping the main question fully in view. And

3. As there is ample time to send the recommendation to the several annual conferences, it will afford opportunity to comply with the requisition of the general conference of 1796, who, among other matters, enjoined the following: "The preachers and other members of our society are requested to consider the subject of negro Slavery with deep attention, till the ensuing general conference: and that they may impart to the general conference, through the medium of the yearly conferences, or otherwise, any important thoughts upon this subject, that the conference may have full light, in order to take further steps towards the eradicating this enormous evil from that part of the Church of God to which they are united."—*His. Dis.* p. 276.

4. And lastly, in case of secession or of any appeal to courts, the process may be well by cutting off the plea of unconstitutionality. For, from the Supreme Court of our country, as it is unhappily constituted, this plea may be fairly anticipated. For at present, and for many years past, a majority of the judges have been slaveholders, and their proclivities have been already sufficiently manifested in their decisions between the M. E. Church and the M. E. Church South. So that *pro forma*, and for the above reasons, it may be, perhaps, best to have the general rule changed; but always, however, with the understanding, that we never admit that the Methodist Episcopal Church is now, or ever has been constitutionally slaveholding.